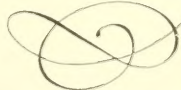


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THE BREEDING PLACE OF THE BLACK-HEADED GULL.

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THE
BIRDS OF CHESHIRE

BY
T. A. COWARD AND CHARLES OLDHAM

WITH SIX PHOTOGRAVURE ILLUSTRATIONS
AND A MAP OF THE COUNTY



MANCHESTER
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DEDICATION.

THIS Book is dedicated to the Memory of THOMAS COWARD of Bowdon, whose quiet life was devoted to the interests of Science. His special knowledge of Botany and Geology was supplemented by a general acquaintance with kindred subjects, with whose advance his constant study of scientific literature enabled him to keep pace. He taught his son to love Nature, and his help was ever at the service of the many friends to whom his character endeared him.

PREFACE.

THERE is no need nowadays to apologise for the publication of a County Fauna. The value of local lists to naturalists is so generally recognised, that it is a matter of surprise that no comprehensive account of the Cheshire Birds has hitherto been compiled. As no one has come forward to fill up the gap, and place Cheshire on a level with neighbouring counties in this respect, we venture to submit this work to the public. Our object has been to critically consider the lists of previous authors, who have dealt with portions of the county only, and the records which have appeared from time to time in magazines and other publications. We have been able to supplement these with information communicated to us by many correspondents, and with matter from our own notebooks.

We have purposely omitted technical descriptions of plumage, and general observations on habits, which may be found in any reliable textbook, and have endeavoured to express ourselves as concisely and in as simple language as possible.

T. A. COWARD, BOWDON.
CHARLES OLDHAM, ALDERLEY EDGE.

March 1900.

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MAP OF CHESHIRE.

INTRODUCTION.

CHESHIRE is a maritime county in the north-west of England, having an area of 1102 square miles. On the west it is bounded by the shallow waters of Liverpool Bay and the estuaries of the Dee and Mersey. It is separated from Lancashire on the north by the river Mersey and its tributary the Tame; from Yorkshire in the north-east by the ridge of hills which forms the watershed of the Mersey and the Yorkshire Ouse; from Derbyshire and Staffordshire in the east by the rivers Etherow, Goyt, and Dane, tributaries of the Mersey; and from Flintshire and Denbighshire on the south-west by the Dee. The county is bounded on the south by Shropshire and Flintshire, but the border-line is not a natural one.

The district thus defined varies greatly in character, whether judged by its physical features or by its fauna and flora, and is divided naturally into three areas—the CENTRAL PLAIN, the HILL COUNTRY OF THE EAST, and the WIRRAL PENINSULA AND MARSHES OF THE DEE.

THE CENTRAL PLAIN.

Four-fifths of the total surface of the county is occupied by an extensive, slightly undulating, and very fertile plain, composed for the most part of glacial deposits resting upon rocks of new red sandstone. This Plain extends from the Mersey to the Dee, and

except on its eastern confines is seldom more than from two to three hundred, and in some places less than one hundred, feet above the sea-level. Southward, however, from a promontory overlooking the Mersey near the mouth of the Weaver, runs a tract of high ground, which attains an altitude of over 500 feet at Harrol Edge, Eddisbury Hill, and Beeston Castle, and over 700 feet in the neighbourhood of Peckforton and Bickerton. In the east the sandstone rocks of Alderley Edge, rising abruptly from the surrounding level, reach at their summit the height of 604 feet.

The northern portion of the Plain is drained by the Mersey, whose polluted waters are merged in the Manchester Ship Canal near Carrington. Within the memory of persons still living, salmon ascended the Mersey every year to spawn in its upper reaches; but now, running as it does for the greater part between artificial banks and gathering fresh impurities with every mile, it is doubtful whether the river contains any fish below Stockport, and it offers few attractions for birds. Gulls of various species, however, work their way up the stream from the tidal waters, and it is noteworthy that these visitors have increased in numbers since the Ship Canal was opened, whilst a few pairs of Common Sandpipers still feed their young on the banks of pebbles formed by the swift current, and Sand Martins tunnel their nesting-holes in the soft banks. Near Heatley the Mersey receives the tributary waters of the Bollin, which rises in the Hill Country and is early contaminated by the refuse of the Macclesfield factories. From that town to its confluence with the Mersey, it flows through an agricultural district, where it is augmented by the streams of the Dean and Birkin, finally reaching the Mersey in a

state of comparative purity. In the south-west the chief streams are the Dee, there a broad and placid river, and the sluggish Gowy, which, rising at Bunbury, flows through low-lying meadows and enters the Mersey Estuary near Stanlow Point. The principal river of the Cheshire Plain, however, is the Weaver, which drains the whole of its central and southern portions. From its source in the Peckforton Hills, the Weaver has a south-easterly course to Audlem on the Staffordshire border, thence it runs almost due north through Nantwich to Northwich, where it receives the combined waters of its tributary streams, the Wheelock and Dane. From Northwich to Frodsham, where it enters the Mersey Estuary, the Weaver entirely loses its rural character, becoming a navigable stream thronged with barges employed in the salt and chemical trades. The Dane, running though it does through the considerable town of Congleton, is a rapid and fairly pure stream at Middlewich; and the Dipper, in Cheshire so characteristic of the Hill Country, still nests on its banks at Holmes Chapel.

The small lakes, or meres as they are locally called, are a very characteristic feature of the Cheshire Plain. Many of them owe their existence to the subsidence of the land overlying the rock-salt deposits. Water percolating the beds has gradually dissolved the salt and carried it away by means of brine springs, and a depression has resulted. The 'flashes' in the neighbourhood of Northwich and Winsford are being formed at the present time in a similar manner by the artificial pumping of the brine. The largest of these meres are Rostherne Mere, Tatton, Arley, Tabley, Pickmere, and Great Budworth, forming a group in the north; Radnor and Redes Mere in the east; Crewe, Doddington,

Combermere, Bar Mere, and Marbury Mere in the south; and Oakmere, Pettypool, and Oulton in the Delamere Forest district. The seclusion afforded by their position, fringed as they frequently are with dense reed-beds, and situated within extensive demesnes, coupled with the fact that they abound in fish and support a varied and luxuriant aquatic vegetation, makes the meres the resort of many interesting birds during the breeding season. They are pre-eminently the home of the Great Crested Grebe, Coot, and Reed Warbler. If a beach or sand-spit be present, one or two pairs of Common Sandpipers are sure to be met with; whilst the Mallard, Kingfisher, and Heron, although occurring as plentifully in other situations, find here the conditions suited to their diverse requirements. In stormy weather the meres are visited by Gulls, Terns, and an occasional Cormorant; and during the winter months large flocks of wildfowl of various species may be seen feeding or sleeping on their surface. Besides the meres, there are many smaller lakes or pools, and in most places nearly every large field contains one or more ponds or marl-pits. These 'pits,' as they are always called, were formerly the sole source of manure supply for the permanent pastures, but the advance in the manufacture of artificial manures has caused them to be disused, and now they are choked with vegetation. The Moorhen builds amongst their flags and rushes, and the Sedge Warbler and Reed Bunting sing in the rank herbage and bushes that clothe their margins. The Little Grebe, comparatively rare on the meres, occasionally nests on these pits, provided the situation is secluded and the water fairly open.

With the exception of Northwich (pop. 15,000), the

smaller places engaged in the salt trade, and Crewe (pop. 29,000), there are no towns of any size in the central portion of the Cheshire Plain; the manufacturing towns of Stockport (pop. 70,000), Macclesfield (pop. 36,000), and Congleton (pop. 11,000), being situate on its eastern border, whilst Chester (pop. 37,000) and Runcorn (pop. 20,000) are in the extreme west. Along the northern border of the Plain the country is rapidly losing much of its charm owing to the extension of the southern suburbs of Manchester, and here the requirements of a residential district, rather than the proximity of factories, are yearly curtailing the haunts of many birds. It must, however, be borne in mind that the plantations, shrubberies, and extensive gardens, as well as the ground devoted to the cultivation of market produce in these suburban districts, have undoubtedly contributed, directly and indirectly, to the increase of others. Owing to the growth of the manufacturing towns and the residential suburbs of Manchester, the population of Cheshire has quadrupled during the present century, but the greater part of the county, and the Plain in particular, is still essentially agricultural. Dairy-farming, for which the nature of the soil and the humid climate are well suited, is carried on here to a greater extent than anywhere else in Britain. According to the returns of the Board of Agriculture for 1897, there were in that year in Cheshire 103,325 milch cattle, a number higher by fifty per cent. per thousand acres than in any other county. Dairy-farming necessarily implies extensive grazing ground, and in 1897 there were in the whole county 338,863 acres under permanent pasture, whilst wheat was grown only on 13,533 and oats on 61,940 acres, the land under other cereals being inconsiderable.

The small acreage under corn (about fifty per cent. of the average for the whole country) and the large proportion of grass land undoubtedly influence the status of many species. During the last half-century farming in Cheshire has greatly improved. Land, wet and full of rushes, has been drained—to the detriment of such species as the Common Snipe—and its fertility largely increased by the use of artificial manures. Not only have old and tangled hedgerows, which afforded secure nesting-places for Warblers and other birds, been grubbed up and replaced by mathematically straight thorn hedges or wire fences, but waste lands and mosses have been reclaimed and cultivated, with results doubtless advantageous for the common weal, but deplorable in the extreme when viewed from the standpoint of the field-naturalist.

Unfortunately there is no record at all of the birds found in Cheshire more than sixty years ago, and we can only speculate with regard to the Marsh Harriers, Bitterns, Short-eared Owls, and Teal, which, with the Twite and other species, probably nested on the extensive peat-mosses, of which fragments only remain in places such as Lindow Common, near Wilmslow, and Danes Moss, near Macclesfield. Whitley Reed, between Great Budworth and Grappenhall, now indistinguishable from the surrounding country, is said to have been one of the wildest and deepest mosses in Cheshire. It was reclaimed during the years 1850-52, and almost all trace of its ancient avifauna is lost. Carrington Moss, now entirely cultivated, was fourteen years ago a well-stocked grouse-moor, comprising about six hundred acres of moorland. This, the last to be reclaimed, affords us some indication of the primitive condition of the other mosses, for, prior to its purchase by the Manchester

Corporation in 1886, it was the haunt during the breeding season of the Red Grouse, Short-eared Owl, Curlew, Common Snipe, and Twite. An interesting instance of the change in bird life wrought by cultivation is exhibited in the rapid colonisation of Carrington Moss, after its reclamation, by the Common Bunting.

Owing, in a large measure, to the extensive preservation of game, there is no lack of woods and plantations in the Cheshire Plain, the area under this heading for the whole county being returned in 1897 at 24,836 acres. The pastures in the dairy-farming districts are pleasantly interspersed with pheasant-coverts, many of which are of quite recent growth. Where the rivers have carved out narrow valleys in the alluvium, as the Bollin has between Wilmslow and Bowdon, the steep banks are often clothed with hanging woods, which furnish congenial quarters for Warblers, Finches, and other passerine birds. Large parks are numerous, and those such as Dunham Massey, Tatton, and Doddington, which contain much old timber, are the favoured haunts of Woodpeckers, the Tawny Owl, Redstart, and Titmice. At Rudheath there are extensive plantations of fir and birch, and the hillsides at Alderley Edge, Overton, and Peckforton are clothed with woods of beech and fir. The most extensive woodlands in Cheshire are, however, situated within the Royal Forest of Delamere, which lies between Northwich and Chester. In 1812, commissioners were authorised to enclose all that remained of the waste lands in this district, which then amounted to 7755 acres, one-half of which was retained by the Crown, and the other half allotted to the adjoining landed proprietors. A large proportion of the Forest was planted with fir, oak, and beech, but a good deal of sparsely wooded heath-land still remains. Game-

preservation is not so rigorous here as in many parts of the county, where the prevailing religion may almost be said to be the worship of a burnished idol in the shape of a cock Pheasant, and no one travelling through the Forest can fail to be struck by the abundance of the Jay and Magpie. In the oak-woods during summer the Tree Pipit and Wood Wren outnumber any other species, and after dark the 'churring' of the Nightjar may be heard in every direction.

THE EASTERN HILLS.

That part of Cheshire which lies between the Tame and Etherow, and the district east of a line drawn from Marple to Macclesfield and thence to Harecastle on the Staffordshire border, constitute a well-marked area, an outlying portion of the Peak country, entirely different in physical features from the Cheshire Plain. The millstone grit and other primary rocks of which this district is composed are weathered into picturesque 'edges,' and attain a considerable altitude in many places. Shining Tor, on the Derbyshire border near Buxton, is 1833 feet, and the conical peak of Shuttlings Low in the same neighbourhood is 1658 feet high. From Bosley Cloud, Congleton Edge runs south-west to Mow Cop, the southern outpost of the Hill Country. The moorland ridge stretching from Staleybridge to Woodhead has its greatest elevation near the source of Heyden Brook at Black Hill (1908 feet), the highest point in Cheshire.

Apart from the manufacturing towns of Hyde (pop. 30,000), Dukinfield (pop. 29,000), and Staleybridge (pop. 27,000) in the Tame Valley, the East Cheshire Highlands

are sparsely populated, the hillsides being covered with rough pastures, separated from one another by stone walls, whilst the higher ground is generally uncultivated grouse-moor. The 'cloughs,' the little valleys which the peat-stained mountain streams have cut in the mill-stone grit, are generally treeless except for a few stunted mountain-ashes and birches. In Longdendale or among the hills of Macclesfield Forest one may walk for miles amongst the heather. During spring and summer these breezy uplands abound in bird life which contrasts as strongly with that of the Plain as do the physical features of the country themselves. Here the Red Grouse reigns supreme: in its interest the birds of prey are persecuted unmercifully; but the beautiful little Merlin still nests in certain places, and in autumn the Peregrine Falcon is a not infrequent visitor. The clear whistle of the Golden Plover and the bubbling cry of the Curlew, as well as the Snipe's bleat and the Lapwing's mournful wail, are familiar sounds, whilst the wild ringing song of the Ring Ousel may be heard on every hand. The Twite nests in the ling, and the Meadow Pipit, perhaps more abundant here during summer than any other bird, pours forth its quavering song, or follows its enemy, the Cuckoo, with plaintive *peep*. The Wheatear haunts the stone walls of the pastures, and the Mistle Thrush and Tree Pipit are characteristic birds of the plantations on the lower slopes. In winter, however, except for the Red Grouse, these hill solitudes are practically deserted, and at that season we have tramped from dawn to dusk across the Longdendale Moors without seeing any other bird.

The chief streams are the Etherow, Goyt, and Dane. The Etherow has been dammed, and the upper part of its course forms a chain of reservoirs some five miles

in length, whence Manchester obtains a part of its water supply. Woodhead Reservoir is 134 acres, and Torside Reservoir 160 acres in extent. Their shores, bare as those of a mountain tarn, offer few attractions for birds. The Common Sandpiper, however, is an exception, being abundant here, as indeed it is everywhere in the Hill Country. In winter, also, the waters are often visited by large flocks of wildfowl. From Broadbottom to its confluence with the Goyt, near Marple, the banks of the Etherow are pleasantly wooded. The Goyt and Dane, rising on the hills between Macclesfield and Buxton, are for the first few miles of their course rippling trout-streams on the open moorland. Descending, they flow through valleys of remarkable beauty, whose sides are clothed with hanging woods, and later they debouch upon the Plain. The Goyt below Whaley Bridge is much polluted, but the Dane retains its purity until it has traversed the Plain for some distance. The Dipper, Grey Wagtail, and Common Sandpiper are characteristic birds of these streams and their tributary becks, and in the woods fringing their banks the Garden Warbler is very plentiful. The Black Grouse occurs in several places amongst the hills. At Bosley there is a large reservoir, where the Coot and Great Crested Grebe nest annually, and other reservoirs of lesser extent are situate at Whaley Bridge and near Macclesfield.

WIRRAL AND THE MARSHES.

Between the estuaries of the Mersey and Dee lies the hammer-headed peninsula of Wirral. Inland, the country differs little in character from the Central Plain, and, like it, is largely devoted to dairy-farming.

Birkenhead (pop. 100,000), on the Mersey opposite Liverpool, the largest town in Cheshire, is surrounded by an extensive residential district; whilst New Brighton, Hoylake, and West Kirby are popular seaside resorts. A heath-clad ridge of high land runs from Caldy Hill by Thurstaston to Heswall Hill (358 feet). Here the Stonechat, almost unknown on the Cheshire Plain, is a not uncommon resident. Fir-woods top the low hills at Storeton and Burton, and an eminence at Bidston (230 feet) rises abruptly from the low land about Wallasey. The coastline from New Brighton to Hoylake is fringed by sand-dunes, once a sanctuary for the Stock Dove and Sheld Duck, but now largely converted into golf-links. The marshes which formerly extended behind the sandhills have been drained and cultivated, and the encroachments of the sea prevented by the construction of the Leasowe Embankment. The muddy shores of the estuaries rise in places, as from West Kirby to Heswall, in low mudbanks, but there are no cliffs where rock-haunting birds such as Gulls, Guillemots, or Razorbills can breed. Some species, however, that nest on the Carnarvonshire crags frequent the coast throughout the year. Above Eastham the southern shore of the Mersey has been considerably altered by the construction of the Manchester Ship Canal, and several interesting woods have been destroyed, notably one at Hooton, which contained a heronry. About a mile from Hoylake, at the extreme north-west of Cheshire, are the rocky islets of Hilbre, whose weathered sandstone faces rise about fifty feet above the surrounding sandbanks. At low tide it is possible to walk dryshod from the Cheshire shore to Hilbre, where the Rock Pipit, very rare, if not entirely absent from the mainland, nests, and the Sheld Duck and

Wheatear rear their young in the numerous rabbit burrows.

Between the present narrow artificial channel of the Dee and the old coastline, which runs from Burton to Blacon Point, there lies a tract of cultivated country, known as Sealand, which has been gradually reclaimed from the sandbanks and saltings of the estuary during the last hundred and fifty years. Sealand, once the haunt of innumerable wildfowl, is now intersected by roads and dotted with farmsteads. Less than fifty years ago the tide flowed to within a few yards of Shotwick Church, and old residents well remember Bernicle Geese feeding within gunshot of the churchyard. The rapid silting up of the estuary, consequent upon the alteration in the channel, which has ruined the once important packet-station and seaside resort of Parkgate, and the pushing back of the sea by successive embankments, have curtailed the haunts of the wildfowl. The outer fringe of saltings, however, in the neighbourhood of Burton and Denhall, and the miles of sandbank exposed at low water, still attract numbers of Geese and flocks of Curlews, Oyster-catchers, and other Waders in the winter. Dunlins, which formerly bred upon the marshes, and Ringed Plovers resort in thousands to the saltings at the periods of migration.

Politically, Sealand and the marshes near Burton belong to the county of Flint, but for faunal purposes it is impossible, even if it were advisable, to discriminate between the land north of the Dee channel and the adjoining parts of Cheshire, and we have therefore considered this district as part of the county. As one cannot refer birds observed on the estuaries to any particular county, we have also included in our purview the whole of the tidal waters of the Dee and Mersey.

PROTECTION.

In Cheshire, as in most parts of England, the Wild Birds Protection Act of 1880 was practically a dead letter, hardly any attempt being made by the local authorities to enforce the law. Taking advantage, however, of the powers conferred by the Act of 1894, the Cheshire County Council applied for an order for extended protection, which was granted on July 10th, 1895. This order enacted that the close time, which by the Act of 1880 existed from March 1st to July 31st, should be extended to August 12th, and that throughout the whole of the county the Kestrel and Heron should be afforded the protection enjoyed by the specially scheduled birds. Further, that within a specified area, lying between Birkenhead and Meols, which included the shoreline and sandhills, the following birds should be classed with those in the schedule of the Act of 1880:—Red-backed Shrike, Whinchat, Spotted Flycatcher, Sedge Warbler, Blackcap, Grasshopper Warbler, Wood Warbler, Garden Warbler, Mistle Thrush, Common Bunting, Reed Bunting, Goldfinch, Wheatear, Chiffchaff, Golden-crested Wren, Yellow Wagtail, Pied Wagtail, Skylark, and Titlark. The taking or destroying of the eggs of all wild birds was prohibited in this prescribed area, and the eggs of Owls, the Bittern, Kingfisher, Kestrel, Heron, Sheld Duck, Dunlin, Black-headed Gull, Common Tern, and Oyster-catcher received protection throughout the county.

On March 1st, 1897, a further order, based on the additional powers conferred by the Act of 1896, was issued, which prohibited the taking or killing of the Kingfisher, Great Crested Grebe, Heron, Goldfinch, and

Owls anywhere within the county borders throughout the whole year. It also protected at all seasons of the year, within the prescribed area in Wirral, all wild birds, whether scheduled or not.

By a third order, dated February 15th, 1898, Gulls and Terns are protected all the year round in the parishes bordering the Dee and Mersey Estuaries.

The regulations formulated by the County Council are, however, so complicated as to be to a great extent useless. Rules applying to one parish may be in-operative in an adjoining one; and police officers, desirous though they may be to enforce the law, not being practical ornithologists, frequently err in identifying species. Again, eggs of the Bittern and Dunlin, birds which have long since ceased to nest and are not likely to return to their old breeding haunts in the county, are specially protected, whilst nests of the Great Crested Grebe, the Goatsucker, the Woodpeckers, and the Redshank may be robbed with impunity. Were it not for private protection the last-named bird, already much reduced in numbers, would soon be extinct as a breeding species. The Great Crested Grebe is specially protected, and rightly so, but no regulations have been made with regard to its eggs, and on many of the meres its nests are robbed year after year by greedy and unscrupulous collectors. The regulations as they now stand present a curious anomaly with regard to the Greater and Lesser Black-backed Gulls. These two species were not included with the other Gulls in the schedule of the Act of 1880; but by section 9 of the order of February 15th, 1898, they are protected 'during the whole of that period of the year to which the protection of wild birds under the Wild Birds Protection Act of 1880 (as extended by

section 2 of this order¹) does not extend.' The consequence is that although the Black-backed Gulls are protected during the greater part of the year in the coast parishes, yet from March 1st to August 12th, the season when they need protection most, they may be shot by owners and occupiers of the land on which they are found.

The existing regulations are flagrantly violated by game-preservers and their keepers; and Kestrels and Owls, although specially protected, are, on most shootings, ruthlessly slain and their eggs destroyed whenever opportunity offers. There can indeed be little doubt that, if wild birds are to reap the benefit of the existing legislation, all ornithologists and lovers of birds must use their influence and knowledge to see that the law is properly enforced.

GAME-PRESERVATION.

In sporting districts the influence of game-preservation, direct and indirect, upon the avifauna is very great and far-reaching. This is eminently the case in an agricultural county like Cheshire, where Pheasants and Partridges are preserved universally in the lowlands, and Grouse in the moorland districts. Incessant war is waged against predatory birds and mammals, whilst other creatures, inimical to game and often of undoubted benefit to the agriculturist, are destroyed by biassed and indiscriminating gamekeepers. Individual keepers often acknowledge that certain species, such as Owls and the Kestrel, are practically harmless to game, but still they shoot and trap them, partly from long-established custom, but chiefly because their masters

¹ Section 2 extends the close season from August 1st to August 12th.

insist upon a large head of game being reared at all costs. Any creature, therefore, against which there is even traditional suspicion, is under their ban. It is greatly to be deplored that those who are responsible for the keeper's actions should selfishly sanction the destruction of creatures whose value to the community has been amply proved, thereby often contributing to the violation of the Wild Birds Protection Act.

As a consequence of this policy, the Kestrel, Sparrow Hawk, and Merlin are the only remaining resident Hawks, and these are rapidly becoming rarer.

The larger species, the Peregrine Falcon, Buzzards, and Harriers, now only known as stragglers, are shot or trapped immediately they appear. Owls on most shootings fare little better, whilst the Magpie and Jay are in some districts almost extinct. From the game-preserver's somewhat limited point of view, the slaughter of some of these birds may be justifiable; but what excuse can be offered for the destruction of the Common and Honey Buzzards, Owls, Cuckoo, and Goatsucker? Pole-traps, primarily designed for the capture of Hawks, are often responsible for the lingering death of Ring Ousels, Cuckoos, and other innocent birds. On trout-streams Kingfishers and Herons are persecuted regardless of the law, and any rare bird is shot either upon mere suspicion or out of pure wantonness.

Although the preservation of game is prejudicial to many birds, the fact must not be overlooked that others owe to the practice many advantages which they could not otherwise enjoy. The destruction of birds of prey on account of the harm they do, or are alleged to do, to game, contributes materially to the welfare of many passerine species. The abundance of Thrushes

and Blackbirds in many districts, and the inconvenient increase of the House Sparrow, are largely owing to the systematic repression of the Sparrow Hawk. There can be little doubt, too, that Ring Doves would be less numerous if the larger Hawks were unmolested; and Merlins, were they left in peace, would diminish the numbers of Meadow Pipits, Twites, Wheatears, and other small birds of the moorlands.

A more important factor in the economy of many species is the existence of the coverts indispensable to the preservation of the Pheasant. There is little natural woodland in the Cheshire Plain, and were it not for the care lavished on the Pheasant, the area at present occupied by woods and coverts would be almost entirely replaced by grazing or arable land. Many birds of various species find in the coverts the security and seclusion necessary to them in the breeding season. The Hawfinch and Turtle Dove, especially, would in all probability be hardly known in Cheshire, were the coverts absent; whilst the Jay, persecuted though it is, owes its very existence to the privacy of these retreats.

LITERATURE.

Prior to 1854, when the *Fauna of Liverpool* was published, practically nothing had been written on the subject of Cheshire birds, and ornithologists of to-day labour under great disadvantages, having no record of the avifauna of the county when the conditions were widely different from those of the present time. Even during the last half-century great changes have taken place; many species have become extinct, whilst others have established themselves or increased in numbers, and there can be no doubt that similar

changes, of which there is no chronicle whatever, have taken place in former times.

In Domesday Book about a score of scattered localities are mentioned where there were 'aeries of hawks,' but it is, of course, impossible to refer any of these to particular species. It is also stated of a wood at Hantone (Hampton), that 'In King Edward's time the whole was worth v shillings. It now renders ii shillings and one sparrowhawk' (*sprevarium*).

Daniel King in his *Vale-Royall of England, or the County Palatine of Chester*, published in 1656, says of the Forests of Delamere and Maxfield, that:—'Wild-Fowl aboundeth there in such store, as in no other Countrey have I seen the like; namely, Wild-Geese, and Wild-Ducks. Of which first sort, a man shall see sometimes flying, neer 200. in one flock; and likewise of the Ducks, 40. or 50. in a flock. And in other kinds also it hath like store; as Phesant, Morehen, Partridg, Woodcocks, Plovers, Teels, Widgins; and of all kind of small Birds. So hath it on the contrary sort, Ravens, Crows, Choughs, Kites, Gleads, and such like.' In the portion of the same work that was written by William Webb, another description of Delamere Forest is given. Webb remarks that there is 'Great store of Fish and Fowl in the Mears, Puits or Sea Mawes; in the flashes.'

The Natural History of Lancashire, Cheshire, and the Peak of Derbyshire, by Dr. Charles Leigh, was published in 1700. The learned doctor traverses a wide range of subjects, and makes sundry interesting statements with regard to Lancashire birds, but does not refer specially to those of Cheshire.

In 1854, Mr. Isaac Byerley's *Fauna of Liverpool* was published. He included in the Liverpool district the

whole of Wirral and other parts of West Cheshire, and the section of his work that treats of the avifauna is the earliest catalogue of the birds occurring in even a portion of the county. Unfortunately, many of the rarer species are dismissed with only a few words, and in some cases the evidence of identification is deficient. Owing to the lack of particulars several of the most interesting specimens cannot now be traced, and in the absence of confirmatory evidence the claim of certain birds to a place in the Cheshire list is very slender.

In a paper on the 'Notabilia of the Archaeology and Natural History of the Mersey District,' published in the *Transactions of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* (Session 1865-66), Mr. H. Ecroyd Smith gives an account of the local birds, compiled almost entirely from notes supplied by other naturalists.

In 1874, the late J. F. Brockholes contributed to the Chester Society of Natural Science and Literature *The Birds of Wirral*. Unlike Byerley, who although a specialist in other branches of natural history had only a general knowledge of birds, Brockholes was an enthusiastic practical ornithologist. His intimate acquaintance with the Wirral Peninsula and the Dee Marshes in particular, coupled with his zeal, enabled him to add several species to those recorded in the *Fauna of Liverpool*. Several of his most interesting notes, however, are unfortunately lacking in detail, and it is now almost impossible to substantiate his records of such rare species as Temminck's Stint, the Garganey, Gadwall, and Great Skua.

About the same time a series of interesting articles on the 'Birds of Lancashire and Cheshire' by Mr. Francis Nicholson, who wrote under the *nom de plume* of 'Redshank,' appeared in the *Manchester City News*.

These contained much valuable information about some of the rarer species which have occurred from time to time. A paper on the 'Heronries of Lancashire and Cheshire,' from the same able pen, appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* in 1881.

The late Dr. J. D. Sainter, in his *Scientific Rambles round Macclesfield* (1878), gives a list of the birds reputed to have occurred in the neighbourhood of that town. In the majority of cases he merely indicates the comparative rarity of the different species. He gives no particulars of the precise locality in which some of his rarer species have occurred, and it is therefore uncertain whether they should be credited to Cheshire, Derbyshire, or Staffordshire. To show how unreliable the list is, it is perhaps sufficient to mention that the Dipper, Magpie, and Ring Ousel are marked as 'rare'; the Curlew and Common Sandpiper as 'very rare'; and the Great Crested Grebe as 'very, very rare.' The Golden Plover is said to be 'very, very, very rare,' and not to nest in the district; and the astounding statement is made that the Grey Lag Goose used to breed regularly upon Danes Moss before the railway crossing it was constructed.

The fourth number of the *Proceedings of the Chester Society of Natural Science and Literature*, published in 1894, was, to ornithologists, an exceedingly interesting volume. It contained an exhaustive paper on the 'Heron and Heronries of Cheshire and North Wales,' by Mr. R. Newstead, and the 'Birds of West Cheshire, Denbighshire, and Flintshire,' by Dr. W. H. Dobie. This, the latest and most important account of the birds of Cheshire, deals with the whole of the county west of a line running due south from Warrington, and

therefore includes the districts treated of by Byerley and Brockholes. With the exception of Sainter's inaccurate list, no account has yet appeared of the birds occurring east of this line, and it is to be regretted that Dr. Dobie's excellent work did not embrace the whole of the county. Had it done so, our present attempt to give an account of the Cheshire avifauna would have been superfluous.

In addition to these lists, there are many scattered notes relating to Cheshire birds in the pages of the *Zoologist*, *Field*, *Naturalist*, *Ibis*, various standard works on British birds, local newspapers, the Proceedings of Scientific Societies, and other publications.

CHESHIRE COMPARED WITH OTHER FAUNAL AREAS.

There is satisfactory evidence of the occurrence, in a wild state, of two hundred and twenty-two species of birds in Cheshire during the present century. It is impossible to dogmatise on the claims of some of these to a place in the list, and we have considered it advisable to exclude the Canada Goose and the Mute Swan, birds originally introduced, although now existing in a more or less wild state. On the other hand, we have included the Little Owl provisionally, although there is presumptive evidence of its introduction. The records of fourteen species—the Rock Thrush, Cirl Bunting, Crested Lark, Alpine Swift, Roller, Montagu's Harrier, Golden Eagle, American Swallow-tailed Kite, Ruddy Sheld Duck, White-eyed Duck, Harlequin Duck, Temminck's Stint, Spotted Sandpiper, and Noddy Tern—must be considered 'not proven,' and we have only referred to them because

notes of their occurrence have appeared in print. One hundred and ten species breed, or bred until recent years, within the county boundaries. This number includes the Nightingale, for, although a nest has never actually been found, there can be no doubt that the birds have bred on some, at any rate, of the few occasions when their presence has been observed. The Bittern used to nest regularly in the early part of the century, and we are informed that the Hobby has bred in the county within recent years. The Marsh and Hen Harriers have probably only been exterminated as breeding species during this century, whilst the Oyster-catcher, Lesser Tern, and Common Tern may have nested regularly on the coast until comparatively recent years. No definite account of their nests has been preserved, however, and we have not felt justified in including any of these species among the breeders. The Oyster-catcher, Cormorant, Guillemot, Razorbill, Herring Gull, and Kittiwake rear their broods annually on the neighbouring Welsh coast, and are to be seen on Cheshire waters throughout the year, thus occupying the anomalous position of residents which do not nest in the county.

Compared with many other English counties, Cheshire has a remarkably poor avifauna. The number of resident species would, no doubt, be larger were there a rocky coastline, but it is among the casual visitors rather than the residents that the deficiency is apparent. The eastern counties of England are those chiefly affected by the great waves of migratory birds which reach this country from the Eurasiatic continent, and no county in the west is so rich in regular and casual migrants as are those on our eastern seaboard. Cheshire, even for a western county, is

poor in stragglers, for it lies east of the lesser fly-line which passes down the west coast of Great Britain and crosses the Irish Sea from Wigtonshire to Anglesea *viâ* the Isle of Man. In migratory movements observed at the Dee Lightship the route taken by the passing birds was N.E. or S.W., from which it will be seen that migrants travelling along the western coast of England would pass from the Lancashire to the Welsh shores, or *vice versâ*, without touching Cheshire. Large flocks, however, of certain species, such as the Oyster-catcher, Dunlin, Curlew, and Ringed Plover, attracted by the supply of food on the sandbanks and marshes, often visit the estuaries and remain with us for a short period. The Snow Bunting, Little Stint, and Curlew Sandpiper have seldom been observed in Cheshire, whilst the Shore Lark, Lapland Bunting, and Mealy Redpoll—all more or less common on the east coast—are quite unknown. In the memorable invasion of the Little Auk which took place during the winter of 1895-96, thousands of birds were observed in the eastern counties, but, so far as we have been able to ascertain, only a single individual was obtained in Cheshire.

Ornithology has found but few votaries among Cheshire naturalists, and it is of course possible that, owing to a lack of competent observers, small birds such as the Fire-crested Wren, the Barred and Yellow-browed Warblers, and some of the soberly plumaged Waders and Pipits, have escaped notice. There can, however, be little doubt that the geographical position of the county is the primary reason for its meagre avifauna; for if we consider a group of large and conspicuous birds, such as the *Herodiones*, we find that several species, which have occurred more or less frequently in more favoured localities, are unknown in

Cheshire. The size and handsome coloration of all the British species of this order make them a mark for every prowling gunner, and noticeable objects to even an indifferent observer; yet, with the exception of the resident Heron and the Common Bittern, we have records of only four species. The Purple Heron and Night Heron have each been obtained once, and the Spoonbill and Little Bittern twice, whilst the Great White Heron, Little Egret, Buff-backed Heron, Squacco Heron, American Bittern, White Stork, Black Stork, and Glossy Ibis have never been recorded.

In the West of England the Reed Warbler, Nightingale, Nuthatch, Wryneck, and Great Crested Grebe are very rare or quite unknown as breeding species in the counties north of Cheshire; whilst, on the other hand, the Ring Ousel, Dipper, Grey Wagtail, Twite, Red Grouse, Curlew, and Common Sandpiper, birds characteristic of the Derbyshire Peak and the East Cheshire Highlands, are only met with sparingly further south.

The nomenclature and arrangement we have adopted are those used in the second edition of Mr. Howard Saunders' well-known *Manual of British Birds*.

The illustrations have been chosen to portray the haunts of Cheshire birds. We have selected as typical examples, a clough in the East Cheshire Highlands; a mere, a wooded valley, 'flashes' in Delamere Forest (the breeding-place of the Black-headed Gull), and a glade in one of the parks of the Plain; and a stretch of marsh-land in the Dee Estuary.

In conclusion, we desire to tender our sincere thanks for the ready assistance we have received from those to whom we have applied for information. Being under

obligation to so many friends and correspondents, it is impossible for us to mention all here, but we have acknowledged help individually in every case when treating of the separate species. Our special thanks are due to Mr. R. Newstead of the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, and Mr. C. Madeley of the Warrington Museum, for their unvarying courtesy in furnishing us with information relative to the collections under their charge; to Colonel Dixon of Astle and Mr. R. Nunnerley of Congleton, for their kindness in allowing us access to their private collections of local birds; to the Rev. H. G. Barnacle for the loan of the author's copy of *A Sketch of the History of the Church at Holmes Chapel*, which contains a manuscript list of the birds observed in that district; to Mr. Sydney O'Hanlon for taking the photographs from which our illustrations are reproduced; and to Mr. Francis Nicholson for looking over our manuscript and making many valuable suggestions.

THE BIRDS OF CHESHIRE.

ORDER PASSERES.

FAMILY TURDIDÆ.—SUB-FAMILY TURDINÆ.

MISTLE THRUSH.

TURDUS VISCIVORUS, Linnæus.

*Stormcock, Shercock, Sedcock, Sadcock, Shrillcock,
Thricecock.*

As a resident bird, the Mistle Thrush is generally distributed throughout the county, but is much less common than the Song Thrush and Blackbird, and, in the north at any rate, has decreased in recent years. In the east, where it is more plentiful than in other parts of the county, its conspicuous and often untidy nest is placed in the fork of a mountain-ash in some sparsely wooded clough, or in one of the small clumps of trees that break the monotony of the barren hill-sides. Orchard trees, or oaks in the hedgerows, are often selected on the lower ground, and not infrequently the bird builds in suburban gardens, where it boldly defends its nestlings against the attacks of cats and other marauders. At Bosley we once saw a pair of Mistle Thrushes mob a Carrion Crow so persistently

as to drive it discomfited from the little wood in which they were nesting.

In autumn its numbers are supplemented by the arrival of migratory birds, and Mistle Thrushes may then often be seen flying in small straggling flocks high overhead, uttering their harsh, distinctive notes. In common with the other Thrushes, it is very partial to the ripe berries of the mountain-ash.

SONG THRUSH.

TURDUS MUSICUS, Linnæus.

Throstle.

Throughout Cheshire, from the sea-coast to the hills in the east, the Song Thrush is everywhere abundant. The large area of land under cultivation, plentifully supplied with woods and coverts, affords it ideal conditions of existence. It is met with high up on the hillsides in the wooded cloughs. Sparrow Hawks and other raptorial birds which would keep down its numbers are under the ban of the game-preserve; and though thousands of Thrushes' nests are robbed every year by country children, the bird seems to be on the increase.

In its choice of a nesting-site this species is very catholic. Whitethorn hedges and evergreens, such as holly or rhododendron, are most frequently selected, but nests are often placed in forest trees, either in a fork high above the ground, on a horizontal branch, or among the roots of some fallen monarch. The hedgebanks, so common in Cheshire lanes, are often chosen; and occasionally a ledge in a deserted out-building, or even the bare ground, is used.

Early in April, before the foliage is thick, the large nest

is often absurdly conspicuous, and the blue eggs would court detection were it not for the protective tints of the brooding bird as she crouches low in the nest with her bill held almost vertically and her speckled breast concealed.

With the return of mild weather in spring the voice of the Song Thrush is heard on every side throughout the day, and often until long after dark; and after the moult the bird sings in the late autumn and through the winter if the weather be open. In the height of the breeding season we have sometimes seen it singing on the ground.

A migratory movement has been observed in autumn. On October 21st and 23rd, and again on November 10th, 1884, males and females were noted in company at the Dee Lightship.

REDWING.

TURDUS ILIACUS, Linnæus.

The Redwing, in varying numbers, is a winter visitor to Cheshire. Arriving late in autumn—in 1885 they were observed at the Dee Lightship between October 15th and 30th²—it remains through the winter, making its way north again early in spring. Mr. R. Newstead observed large numbers in the Eaton woods, near Chester, in 1889, as late as April 15th.³

The Redwing suffers more than the other Thrushes from severe weather, and if a frost be of long duration many succumb. Shy and retiring in its habits if the weather be mild, it becomes very tame when the ground is frozen hard, and is then compelled to resort to berry-

¹ *Report on the Migration of Birds*, 1884.

² *Ibid.* 1885.

³ W. H. Dobie, 'Birds of West Cheshire, etc.' *Proceedings of the Chester Society of Natural Science and Literature*, Part iv., 1893, p. 286.

bearing trees for food. In the winter of 1889-90, when even the deeper meres were icebound before Christmas, hunger drove the Redwings to the populated districts. In Bowdon they came day after day to some hollies bordering a frequented thoroughfare within a few feet of the house windows. When the trees were stripped the birds devoured the berries which they had at first wastefully allowed to fall. In a fortnight trees and ground alike were bare, but the birds still came, hungry and dejected, and only disappeared when the thaw set in.

FIELDFARE.

TURDUS PILARIS, Linnæus.

Blueback, Kit.

The Fieldfare, one of our best-known autumn visitors, does not arrive in Cheshire until some weeks after its appearance on the east coast. Its numbers fluctuate considerably: in some seasons scarcely one will be seen, but as a rule the birds may be observed throughout the winter frequenting the open fields in small parties. They often consort with Starlings, but unlike them, roost at night upon the bare ground. These flocks may often be seen perched in the topmost branches of some high tree, all the birds facing in one direction.

The low-lying country of the Mersey Valley between Stockport and Warrington is a favourite haunt of the Fieldfare, though it appears to be equally at home on the bleak hill-pastures of the Derbyshire border. Prior to their departure for the northern breeding-grounds, the small parties pack together in large flocks, the majority of which leave by the end of April, although it is not unusual to see late birds during the first fortnight in May.

BLACKBIRD.

TURDUS MERULA, Linnæus.

Ousel.

The fertile Plain of Cheshire supplies the conditions the Blackbird loves, and throughout the year it is one of our commonest birds. Although plentiful in the wooded valleys of the East, it is not met with so high up the hillsides as the Song Thrush.

Hedgerows, evergreens, and the dense undergrowth of many of the game-coverts afford the Blackbird an abundance of suitable nesting-sites. Its staple food—worms, snails, and insects—abounds throughout the dairy-farming districts, where most of the land is pasture; and in autumn toll is levied on the fruit in gardens and orchards as well as on the berries of the mountain-ash, wild rose, and holly. When singing, the Blackbird usually perches near the top of a tree, but we have known the song poured forth from the ridge-tiles or the finial of a house gable.

Examples with more or less white in their plumage are not uncommon, and such varieties are often erroneously reported as Ring Ousels. In the Chester Museum there is a specimen from Ince which has the whole plumage pale French grey, rather darker on the ear-coverts and lighter on the throat.

RING OUSEL.

TURDUS TORQUATUS, Linnæus.

The Ring Ousel is a summer visitor, arriving at the end of March or the beginning of April, and remaining until about the end of September. It has been noted on

rare occasions in mid-winter: the Rev. G. E. Freeman caught a hen and saw a cock bird at Wildboarelough on January 3rd, 1859.¹

The cultivated Cheshire Plain is utterly unsuited to the habits of this species. It does not appear to have nested on the low-lying mosses at Carrington and Lindow before their reclamation, though it has been observed during the spring migration at Hale Moss, Altrincham.² Dr. Dobie has taken eggs on the Bickerton Hills, which rise above the Plain near Malpas, and Mr. R. Newstead records it as breeding on the Overton and Helsby Hills.³ On the actual Plain the bird is almost unknown, but Mr. R. Newstead tells us that one was shot by Mr. A. Cookson near Oakmere in 1893. In Wirral the Ring Ousel has been noted on migration at Hoylake and elsewhere, and Mr. L. Jones has a bird which he shot on Hilbre Island. He informs us that in the latter part of April 1894, another bird frequented the island for several days. Some forty years ago nests were said to have been found at Puddington,⁴ Noctorum,⁵ and Upton,⁶ but the evidence, which gave rise to some controversy at the time, is far from satisfactory, and there is no authentic instance of the Ring Ousel breeding in Wirral in recent years.

In East Cheshire the case is widely different. Perhaps nowhere in England is the Ring Ousel more plentiful than on the wild moors of the Longdendale Valley, and in the Hill Country, from Disley southward

¹ 'Peregrine,' *Field*, vol. xiii. p. 86.

² J. E. Smith, *Manchester City News*, May 16, 1874.

³ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 287.

⁴ J. F. Brockholes, *Proceedings of the Chester Society of Natural Science and Literature*, Part i., 1874, p. 5.

⁵ H. E. Smith, *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, Session 1865-66. N.S. vol. vi. p. 243.

⁶ E. Gleave, *Naturalists' Scrap-book*, p. 229.

to Bosley and eastward to the Derbyshire border. In the month of May, the wild, clear song of half a dozen birds may be heard at one time in some parts of these districts. Like other members of the family, the Ring Ousel is a mimic, and we have heard the *thui* of the Golden Plover admirably reproduced in its song, which, by the way, is often continued until after dark.

The nest, which we have never known to contain more than four eggs, is generally built in a bunch of ling or on a ledge of rock, but not infrequently against the bare, steep bank of a moorland stream. When the nest is approached the hen bird loses her habitual shyness, and dashes close to the head of the intruder, uttering a sharp *tac-tac-tac* of alarm. The cock, though equally clamorous, keeps as a rule at a more respectful distance.

In the late summer the Ring Ousel varies its insect diet with the bilberries which grow in profusion on the hills, and in September flocks with other Thrushes to the mountain-ash trees.

ROCK THRUSH.

MONTICOLA SAXATILIS (Linnæus).

[On April 4th, 1890, Mr. Alfred Fryer, jun., saw a bird on the Overton Hills, near Frodsham, which he believed to be a male Rock Thrush.¹ His description of the plumage, however, would apply to the Wheatear; and as the bird was not obtained, its identity cannot be considered established. In the absence of stronger evidence we do not feel justified in including this species in the Cheshire list.]

¹ *Zoologist*, ser. III. vol. xiv. p. 187.

WHEATEAR.

SAXICOLA ŒNANTHE (Linnæus).

Stonechat, Whiterump.

Although a common summer visitor in the extreme east and west, the Wheatear is only known in the greater part of the county as a passing migrant in April and May. During these months it has been reported from many widely scattered places in the Cheshire Plain, and we have often met with it singly or in small parties on the meadows and ploughed lands of the Mersey Valley near Sale. On July 16th, 1899, Coward saw a Wheatear at High Legh, a locality remote from any known breeding-haunt of the bird, but there was nothing in its behaviour to suggest that it was nesting.

In Wirral the Wheatear is a well-known summer visitor, nesting in some numbers on Hilbre Island. It also breeds in suitable places along the coast from Parkgate to the Frodsham Marshes, as well as on the higher ground at Heswall Hill.

On the hills in Longdendale, where it is known as the 'Stonechat,' the Wheatear is plentiful, nesting in the stone walls. We have seen it in summer on Werneth Low, near Hyde; and once came across a pair which were nesting on an old pit-bank at Woodley. In Lyme Park it nests in rabbit-burrows, and thence to Bosley in the South and the Derbyshire border in the East it is plentiful up to the hilltops. At Rainow, Mr. N. Neave has generally remarked its arrival during the last week of March.

WHINCHAT.

PRATINCOLA RUBETRA (Linnæus).

Utick, Gorsehopper.

The Whinchat reaches Cheshire later than most of the spring migrants, and we have never noted its arrival before the beginning of May. From then to the end of September it occurs in fair numbers in Wirral and throughout the Cheshire Plain. This species chiefly affects low-lying, open country, and is nowhere more plentiful than in the meadows bordering the Mersey between Stockport and Warrington. It is less common in the Hill Country. Near Staleybridge, Mr. S. Radcliffe finds it nesting on the edge of the moorlands, where there is rough ground with furze or stunted bushes. A few pairs may be met with on the lower ground in Longdendale. We have found it nesting on the top of Bosley Minn (1260 feet), and it is scattered uniformly but sparingly over the upland pastures of other hills to the east of Macclesfield.

STONECHAT.

PRATINCOLA RUBICOLA (Linnæus).

Winter Utick.

In the summer months the Stonechat is found in the eastern and western portions of Cheshire, but is absent from the Central Plain. Its distribution during the breeding season, therefore, resembles that of the Wheatear. In Wirral, although less plentiful than the

Whinchat, it is not uncommon on the heathy hills and the warrens near the coast, but is rare in the marshy district of Ince and Helsby. In the East it occurs sparingly. Mr. S. Radcliffe found a nest in 1895 at Dan Bank, Marple, on the borders of the Hill Country, and has in his collection a pair of birds which were obtained at Poynton. He informs us that nests have been found occasionally on the hills near Staleybridge. At the end of May 1897, we watched a cock bird singing in a clough at the foot of Shuttlings Low; but the Stonechat does not appear to be common on the hills near Macclesfield, as Mr. N. Neave has never met with it at Rainow.

Brockholes states that only a few birds winter in Wirral, the majority leaving in autumn.¹ We have never met with the Stonechat on the Cheshire Plain except in the winter months, and even then but rarely, though the places where we have seen it are widely separated.

REDSTART.

RUTICILLA PHŒNICURUS (Linnæus).

Firetail.

Towards the end of April we may look for the appearance of the Redstart, although in backward seasons it is often the first week in May before the brilliant colours of the male attract our attention. Immediately after their arrival the birds select a nesting-site, and it is not unusual to find eggs before the middle of May. During the period of incubation the male keeps in the vicinity of the female, and his

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 6.

song, or plaintive *whee-tic*, is a certain indication of the proximity of a nest.

In the west of Cheshire the Redstart is not very plentiful, and Brockholes considered it scarce in Wirral.¹ Dr. Dobie says it is now rare in the neighbourhood of Chester, although Mr. A. O. Walker formerly found it plentiful, even in the city itself.² Throughout the central and eastern parts of the county the Redstart is increasing in numbers, and in certain localities, such as Delamere Forest and many of the parks, where there is much old timber, it is abundant. Dunham Park is a favourite haunt, and on May 9th, 1896, we saw upwards of a dozen pairs there.

In well-timbered districts the nest is usually placed in a crevice or hole in a tree trunk, although even where such sites are available it is sometimes built in a hole in a wall, or upon a beam beneath the eaves of a building. Mr. W. H. Peterkin once found a nest on the ground among the trees on Alderley Edge. In the East the birds nest in quarries and in the stone walls on the bare hillsides.

The same site is resorted to year after year, if the birds are not molested. For two or three years a pair of Redstarts occupied a deep cleft in a thorn a few yards from the most frequented gate in Dunham Park, and succeeded in bringing off their young, although Whit-week came during the period of incubation, and hundreds of noisy trippers daily passed close by the sitting bird, whilst steam merry-go-rounds and hurdy-gurdies filled the air with discordant sounds within a few yards of the nest.

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 6.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 288.

BLACK REDSTART.

RUTICILLA TITYS (Scopoli).

Mr. R. Newstead came across a pair of Black Redstarts in some old trees in Eaton Park on May 7th, 1888, and was able to identify them, as the male, especially, gave him several opportunities for close observation.¹ This date, although very late for this rare winter visitor, is not unprecedented.²

Brockholes records the occurrence of a female Common Redstart during severe weather in winter, on the Leasowe Embankment; but taking into consideration the place and the season of the year, there can be little doubt that, as Dr. Dobie suggests, this bird was a female Black Redstart.³

Byerley cites one occurrence in Cheshire, a male at Storeton Quarry, about the year 1853, on the authority of Mr. Mather, a Liverpool taxidermist.⁴

REDBREAST.

ERITHACUS RUBECULA (Linnæus).

Robin.

From west to east, except on the bare hilltops, the Redbreast is at all seasons of the year one of our best-known birds. Except for the short interval at the end of summer, when the moult takes place, the Redbreast sings throughout the year. In its song it often mimics

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 288.

² Cf. Howard Saunders, *Manual of British Birds* (second edition), p. 33.

³ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 6.

⁴ Byerley, *Fauna of Liverpool*, 1856, p. 12.

the notes of other birds. Mr. J. J. Cash heard one singing on the bank of a stream, which imitated the call of the Common Sandpiper with such accuracy that, had he not known that the Sandpipers had left for the winter, he would have been entirely misled. We have twice heard the Redbreast introduce the *pe-e-whit* of the Lapwing in its song.

The nest is built in a hole in a hedgebank, among the stones of a garden rockery, or in the loosely built walls so often met with beneath the hedges in Cheshire lanes; and not infrequently on a ledge in a shed or outbuilding. When placed, as it occasionally is, upon the ground, the eggs—white with reddish blotches, or sometimes pure white—are always protected from view by grass or herbage.

NIGHTINGALE.

DAULIAS LUSCINIA (Linnæus).

On the eastern side of the Pennine Range, the Nightingale is not uncommon in some parts of Yorkshire, and has even occurred on one occasion in the north of Northumberland. In the west of England, however, the northern limits of its range are probably marked by the wooded lowlands of Cheshire, where it occurs as an occasional summer visitor.

Almost every year the local newspapers report the occurrence of Nightingales in various parts of the county; but the majority of these instances are unsupported by trustworthy evidence, and investigation generally proves the songster to be a Sedge Warbler, Blackcap, or other bird.

In May 1862, a Nightingale sang for about a fort-

night at Strines on the Derbyshire border. The identity of the bird was vouched for by the late Professor Williamson,¹ Joseph Sidebotham, and John Watson, well-known Manchester naturalists. Mr. Joel Wainwright, who has detailed the circumstances of its visit,² tells us that the bird was first heard in his garden, which, though politically in Derbyshire, is on the Cheshire side of the Goyt. In the same year another bird was said to have taken up its quarters in a hanging wood on the banks of the Dean at Wilmslow, where it was heard nightly by a great number of people, many of whom affirmed that there was no mistake about the species.³ In the following year it was widely reported that a bird was to be heard in Birkenhead Park; but the evidence was far from satisfactory, it being alleged that the songster was not a feathered one and that a hoax had been perpetrated.⁴

Mr. Thomas Worthington, an accurate observer, remarked the occurrence of a Nightingale in Peel Wood, Northenden, in 1882, where it was heard singing from the 1st to the 24th of May.⁵ Mr. C. Hope reported that he heard one in a wood at Bromborough on June 9th, 1883;⁶ but no confirmatory evidence was put forward at the time, and this occurrence cannot be regarded as established.

In Lowercross Gorse, in the parish of Tilston, near Malpas, a Nightingale sang every night during May 1889, and the fact was recorded by the Rev. C. Wolley-

¹ Williamson, *Manchester Guardian*, May 15, 1862.

² Wainwright, *Memories of Marple*, 1899.

³ J. Plant, *Manchester Guardian*, cited in *Field*, vol. xix. pp. 444, 469. 1862.

⁴ T. Fry, *Naturalists' Scrap-book*, p. 53. *Field*, vol. xxi. p. 524. 1863.
C. Gregson, *Naturalists' Scrap-book*, p. 53. N. Cooke, *ibid.* p. 67.

⁵ *Manchester City News*, May 20 and June 3, 1882.

⁶ *Field*, vol. lxi. p. 809. 1883.

Dod.¹ He informs us (*in lit.*) that a bird frequented the same neighbourhood in 1891. Mr. W. E. Sharp, who was familiar with the notes of the bird in Worcestershire, informed Dr. Dobie that he heard a Nightingale through May and part of June 1893, at Ledsham, in Wirral.²

At the end of April 1896, a Nightingale made its appearance in a hanging wood in the grounds of Oakwood Hall, on the bank of the Mersey at Romiley. It was at once recognised by the gardener, an observant man, who subsequently showed in conversation with us that during a prolonged residence in Worcestershire he had made himself acquainted with the song, appearance, and nesting-habits of the species. We heard the bird on several evenings in May. Towards the end of that month its presence had attracted large crowds, and the late Ephraim Hallam, then residing at Oakwood, apprehensive of damage to his property, gave instructions that the Nightingale should be scared away. The firing of blank cartridges in the wood proved ineffectual, until, on the evening of the 21st, one was discharged beneath the tree in which the bird was singing. The male was neither seen nor heard again, but it is not certain that the firing was responsible for its silence, as two days later the gardener saw the hen with food in her beak, and it appears probable that the eggs were then hatched.

In May 1897, a Nightingale was reported as having been heard near Eaton Hall.³

Although neither eggs nor nestlings have been actually found in the county, there is, of course, presumptive evidence that the birds have nested in each case where their occurrence is beyond doubt.

¹ *Field*, vol. lxxiii. p. 754. 1889. *Cf.* Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 288.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 288.

³ *Field*, vol. lxxxix. p. 800. 1897.

SUB-FAMILY SYLVIINÆ.

WHITETHROAT.

SYLVIA CINEREA, Bechstein.

*Peggy Whitethroat, Nettle-creeper, Straw-mouse,
Split-straw, Cut-straw, Smalster.*

During the latter half of April the Whitethroat makes its appearance in our woods and hedgerows, remaining until about the end of August. A few pairs nest amongst the scanty vegetation on Hilbre Island, where on May 15th, 1894, we watched several birds catching insects on the bare sandstone cliffs. Throughout Wirral and the Cheshire Plain the Whitethroat abounds everywhere, being by far the commonest member of the genus *Sylvia*. Even on the bare hills of the East it may be seen in the stunted bushes high up amongst the heather.

The Whitethroat is less retiring in its habits than many of the Warblers, and nests in the hedgerows and rank vegetation bordering the country lanes, as well as in woods and thickets. It is partial to osier-beds where there is a growth of young withies. At Gatley Carrs we have seen nests placed on the tops of willow stumps, a few inches above the damp ground.

LESSER WHITETHROAT.

SYLVIA CURRUCA (Linnæus).

The Lesser Whitethroat, although a regular summer visitor to Cheshire, cannot be considered a common bird, and, in comparison with the Common White-



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throat, is decidedly rare. It breeds sparingly in Wirral and throughout the Plain, but we have never met with it in the Hill Country of the East.

The situations chosen for the nest are usually similar to those of the Common Whitethroat, but we have on more than one occasion found it placed in the hawthorn hedge bordering a garden.

The nest is described by most authorities as being rather shallow,¹ but those we have found have been somewhat deep, cup-shaped structures.

BLACKCAP.

SYLVIA ATRICAPILLA (Linnæus).

Man of the Woods.

The Blackcap is a regular summer visitor, arriving about the end of April, and remaining until the end of August or beginning of September. We have no evidence that it ever winters in Cheshire, although in 1886 one was reported at Chester as early as March 13th.² It is fairly abundant in suitable situations in Wirral and throughout the wooded Plain, but is seldom seen in the Hill Country. In the district east of Macclesfield, Mr. N. Neave occasionally found it, and then only in sheltered spots.

The exquisite song—often trilled from the topmost twig of a high tree—reveals the whereabouts of the Blackcap when the secluded nature of its haunts would otherwise enable it to escape detection. Unlike the Whitethroat, it does not frequent hedgerows and open

¹ Cf. Saunders, *Manual of British Birds*, second edition, p. 44; and Seebohm, *History of British Birds*, vol. i. p. 412.

² J.O.J.P., *Field*, vol. lxxvii. p. 361. 1886.

places, but woods and game-coverts where there is abundant undergrowth. It is most plentiful in hanging woods on the banks of streams. The nest, always well hidden, is usually placed in briers or brambles, although we have found it concealed among the outer leaves of a large rhododendron. In common with many of the Warblers, this species is partial to soft fruit, and to obtain it often resorts to gardens.

GARDEN WARBLER.

SYLVIA HORTENSIS, Bechstein.

The Garden Warbler is one of our latest summer migrants, and does not arrive until some days after the Blackcap. It resembles that species in many of its habits, and may be found in similar situations, but is in most places less common. Mr. R. Newstead, senior, however, finds them in equal numbers at Ince,¹ and in the neighbourhood of Alderley Edge the Garden Warbler is far more plentiful than the Blackcap.

It is not to be met with on the treeless hills in the east of the county, but is extremely abundant in the wooded valley of the Dane, near Wincle, and in the Goyt Valley above Taxal, localities in which the Blackcap is very rare.

GOLDEN-CRESTED WREN.

REGULUS CRISTATUS, K. L. Koch.

The Golden-crested Wren, a resident in Cheshire, breeds sparingly throughout the Plain wherever there

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 289.

are fir plantations, and is plentiful in Delamere Forest and the neighbourhood of Alderley Edge and Chelford. The nest has often been taken on the fir-crowned sandstone ridges in Wirral, at Storeton, Bebbington, Burton, and elsewhere.¹ In the Hill Country the conditions are better suited to its requirements, and the conifers in the wooded upper valleys of the Goyt and Dane afford it abundant nesting-places. Mr. J. J. Cash has found the nest at Middlewood, near Stockport, and Mr. S. Radcliffe informs us that, although he has never found a nest, he sees the birds every breeding season in Arnfield Clough, Longdendale.

In most years large numbers of migrants arrive in autumn from the continent of Europe; and although in some seasons but few visit us, the Goldcrest is usually plentiful throughout the county from the end of October until March. During the winter this species is by no means confined to fir-woods. Combined flocks of Goldcrests, Titmice, and Creepers may often be seen at this season, moving slowly in loose formation, in the woods, along the hedgerows, and even in gardens. At Ince, Mr. R. Newstead has observed it feeding extensively on the American blight (*Schizoneura lanigera*).²

CHIFFCHAFF.

PHYLLOSCOPUS RUFUS (Bechstein).

As a general rule, the Chiffchaff is more local and far less abundant than the Willow Wren, although it is met with in suitable situations throughout the county. In the forest at Delamere this order is reversed and

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 6.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 289.

the Chiffchaff predominates, but in the surrounding cultivated districts the Willow Wren is the commoner species. The Chiffchaff only occurs sparingly in the Hill Country; and in the wooded valley of the Goyt above Taxal, where the conditions are apparently suited to its habits, it is very rare.

The Chiffchaff is our earliest spring visitor, arriving in the north of the county with great regularity about the last day of March. The characteristic song, from which the bird derives its name, continues through June, and we have heard it as late as July 30th, although Mr. Howard Saunders states that the bird ceases to sing in May.¹ The Chiffchaff sings again after the moult in August, but always in a lower key.

WILLOW WREN.

PHYLLOSCOPUS TROCHILUS (Linnæus).

Peggy Whitethroat, White Wren, Ground Wren.

Arriving about ten days later than the Chiffchaff, the Willow Wren is found abundantly throughout the county, being far more plentiful than any of the other Warblers. No sound is more familiar during the summer months, in our woods and thickets, than the simple but inexpressibly sweet song of this bird. Unlike the Chiffchaff, the Willow Wren is abundant in the lanes and hedgerows of the open country, and is even found sparingly in the treeless cloughs of Longdendale and the hills between the valleys of the Goyt and Dane. Mr. N. Neave informs us that he has found the nest amongst the heather on the

¹ Saunders, *op. cit.* p. 68.

hillsides above Errwood Hall. Like the Chiffchaff, this species sings feebly after the autumn moult.

WOOD WREN.

PHYLLOSCOPUS SIBILATRIX (Bechstein).

The Wood Wren arrives later than most of our summer visitors, its shivering song being seldom heard before the last few days in April. It occurs locally throughout the county, being most abundant in woods where oaks and beeches predominate.

Brockholes describes it as a common summer visitor to Wirral.¹ In the unreclaimed parts of Delamere Forest the bird is very plentiful, outnumbering the Chiffchaff and Willow Wren, but is rare in the surrounding cultivated districts. Elsewhere in the Plain it is often absent from plantations and game-coverts of recent growth, but is abundant in parks, such as Dunham and Tatton, where there is much old timber. It is common in the Hill Country between the Dane and Goyt, and in the valley of the former stream above Bosley is heard more frequently than any other Warbler.

The Wood Wren obtains most of its food by searching the twigs and smaller branches of the oaks and beeches which it frequents. Occasionally, however, a bird will drop to the ground, seize an insect, and mount aloft again in an instant; or dash out like a Flycatcher to take an insect on the wing. We have often observed one hover in order to pick off a small green caterpillar from the under side of a leaf.

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 6.

REED WARBLER.

ACROCEPHALUS STREPERUS (Vieillot).

The dense reed-beds that margin many of the Cheshire meres are suitable nesting-places for the Reed Warbler, and in these situations it is not uncommon during the summer months. We have found it breeding at Rostherne, Tatton, Pickmere, Marbury near Northwich, Hatchmere, and Redes Mere. Dr. Dobie has a nest from Marbury Mere, near Whitechurch.¹ In the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, there is a group comprising birds and nest taken at Combermere. Although we have no actual knowledge of the fact, there is little doubt that it breeds on all the other meres where there are reed-beds.

This species is seldom met with at any distance from the large sheets of water, but Mr. H. H. Corbett informs us that about the year 1870 he found a nest at Handforth; and on July 11th, 1896, Coward watched a pair of birds in a willow-bed by the brookside at Nether Peover.

The Reed Warbler has been observed occasionally in Wirral. In June 1865, Mr. Bewley of Poulton took a nest in one of the reedy ditches at Leasowe;² and Brockholes, writing in 1874, says, 'A few years ago this species might generally be detected as an annual summer visitor to the Bidston Marshes.'³

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 290.

² H. E. Smith, *op. cit.* p. 244.

³ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 6.

SEDGE WARBLER.

ACROCEPHALUS PHRAGMITIS (Bechstein).

Pit Sparrow, Night Sparrow.

In the Hill Country of East Cheshire the Sedge Warbler occurs but sparingly, and then only in sheltered situations in the valleys. We have met with one or two pairs in the valley of the upper Dane, near Wincle; and on the marshy ground near Bosley Reservoir the bird is fairly plentiful. Mr. N. Neave informs us that it is not common near Rainow. We have never seen it in the neighbourhood of Crowden and Woodhead, the lack of suitable cover in upper Longdendale being sufficient reason for its absence.

From the end of April until September, the Sedge Warbler is one of the commonest visitors to the lowlands of the rest of the county. It is most abundant in the marsh-lands bordering the meres, by the sides of marl-pits in the fields, and along brooks and ditches, but is not uncommon in plantations and thickets at some distance from any water. Wherever the bird occurs, its chattering song reveals its presence, at night as well as in the daytime.

The fields along the coast at Parkgate are divided by deep ditches, whose beds are clothed with luxuriant vegetation. Old thorn-trees, whose upward growth is prevented by the winds from the sea, fill the upper parts of these ditches to the level of the surrounding fields with a matted mass of twigs and branches. This dense cover affords shelter for innumerable Sedge Warblers, and nowhere have we found the bird so plentiful.

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER.

LOCUSTELLA NÆVIA (Boddaert).

This species is the rarest of the Warblers that nest regularly in the county. It is more plentiful in some seasons than in others. Mr. J. J. Cash informs us that in 1896 he heard several Grasshopper Warblers singing in the neighbourhood of Timperley, a district from which the bird is usually absent.

In Wirral the Grasshopper Warbler has been observed at Bidston, Bebbington, Puddington,¹ Liscard,² and Wallasey.³ In some seasons it is common near Chester. Mr. R. Newstead mentions that it breeds every year at Ince, Thornton-le-Moors, and Dunham-on-the-Hill;⁴ and a nest has been found at Upton.¹ Throughout the Cheshire Plain the bird is very local. The Rev. C. Wolley-Dod has never observed it at Edge.⁴ Mr. N. Neave heard the song twice in the valley of the Bollin, near Ashley, during the spring of 1890; and Coward heard a bird in the same valley close to Bowdon in 1898. Mr. F. Nicholson informs us that he has frequently heard the Grasshopper Warbler in the last-named district, and in the neighbourhood of Dunham Massey in former years. Other localities where we have noted it are Rostherne, Pickmere, Northenden, and Dean Row, near Wilmslow. Nests have been taken several times in the osier-beds at Gatley Carrs. We have no records for the Hill Country, but the bird has been reported from the meadows at the confluence of

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 6.

² I. Cooke, *in lit.*

³ H. E. Smith, *op. cit.* p. 244.

⁴ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 290.

the Goyt and Etherow, and we have seen an example which was shot in that locality.

The curious reeling song of the Grasshopper Warbler is heard to the best advantage in the early hours of the day, and from dusk until after dark. Oldham once watched a bird, at half-past four on a June morning, singing in a conspicuous position on the top of a withy in an osier-bed at Gatley Carrs. During the snatches of song, which lasted from a few seconds to two minutes, as timed by his watch, the bird never closed its mandibles.

SUB-FAMILY ACCENTORINÆ.

HEDGE SPARROW.

ACCENTOR MODULARIS (Linnæus).

Dunnock, Blue Dunnock.

Except on the wind-swept moorlands of Longdendale and the hills east of Macclesfield, the Hedge Sparrow is one of our commonest residents. It nests everywhere in hedgerows and gardens in the lowlands, and its blue eggs may even be found in gorse-bushes at a considerable altitude on the hills.

During summer the Hedge Sparrow may be easily overlooked on account of its retiring habits and the sober tints of its plumage. In winter it is one of our most familiar birds, singing when the majority of songsters are silent, and frequenting the immediate neighbourhood of houses and farmyards, where it may often be seen feeding in company with House Sparrows, Robins, and Finches.

FAMILY CINCLIDÆ.

DIPPER.

CINCLUS AQUATICUS, Bechstein.

Water Ousel.

The greater part of Cheshire is quite unsuitable for the Dipper, and as a breeding species the bird is practically confined to the Hill Country of the East. It is only known to have bred in one locality on the Cheshire Plain, the Dane at Cranage Mill, where the late T. W. Barlow found a nest on more than one occasion,¹ and where the Rev. H. G. Barnacle has taken eggs in recent years. There is a specimen in the Warrington Museum which was killed at Tarporley in the spring of 1893, and we have seen another which was shot at Romiley in winter. In Wirral and the west the Dipper is unknown, although it breeds on the hills on the Welsh side of the Dee, and one has been shot at the mouth of the Wepre Brook at Connah's Quay.²

Throughout the eastern Hill Country the Dipper is very common. It breeds freely on all the streams in Longdendale, and Mr. S. Radcliffe finds it abundant on the tributaries of the Tame above Staleybridge. The bird abounds in the country lying between the upper Goyt and Dane, where it occurs on the little upland becks as well as on the larger streams. Mr. K. H. Jones informs us that he has not met with the Dipper at Disley, but has found the nest on the bank of a polluted brook at Middlewood. Mr.

¹ Barlow, MS.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 291.

M. Wood has also found the bird nesting in this locality.

Nests of the Dipper, which we have examined on the Goyt, consisted of a rather deep cup, made of grass stems and blades of a *Carex*, enveloped by a spherical covering of moss or woven grass stems, and with a small entrance below the median line. The inner nests were lined with a thick layer of dead beech-leaves, intermingled with a few of oak, ivy, and bramble. The outer nest usually harmonises with its environment, being constructed of green moss when placed on wet moss-grown rocks or beneath dripping water, and of dead grasses when built against a neutral-tinted face of bare rock. The strongly contrasted black-and-white plumage renders the bird far less conspicuous than might be imagined amongst the lights and shades of the broken rocks and tumbling water of its haunts.

In spite of persecution, the Dipper resorts persistently to the same nesting-site year after year, and more than one brood is often reared in the same season. In a nest at Middlewood, Mr. K. H. Jones found fully fledged young on April 21st, 1897, and the first egg of a second clutch on May 3rd.

Even before they can fly the young birds are quite at home in the water. We have seen barely fledged nestlings, when alarmed, scramble out of the nest and drop into the swiftly flowing Goyt. Making their way beneath the surface to the opposite bank, they emerged some yards downstream, and sought shelter among the stones.

FAMILY PANURIDÆ.

BEARDED TITMOUSE.

PANURUS BIARMICUS (Linnæus).

In the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, are two Bearded Titmice, male and female, which Dr. Dobie purchased in January 1894 from Mr. W. Cox, a Liverpool taxidermist. Mr. Cox informed him that these birds were shot by himself and a friend on the 2nd or 3rd September 1893, in a little ditch full of reeds between Hoylake and West Kirby.¹ Mr. R. Nunnerley of Congleton has a pair of Bearded Titmice, which he assures us were shot by his father on Whitley Reed forty or fifty years ago.

The Bearded Titmouse is a species that rarely wanders from its usual haunts; and if there has been no error about the places where these birds were obtained, their occurrence is of the greatest interest. The existence of Mr. Nunnerley's specimens almost suggests that the Bearded Titmouse formerly bred at Whitley Reed, which fifty years ago was a wild unreclaimed marsh. Were it not that both Dr. Dobie and Mr. Nunnerley are confident that their specimens are correctly localised, we should hesitate to include the Bearded Titmouse in the county list, and in any case we feel that additional evidence of its occurrence in Cheshire is much to be desired.

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 291.

FAMILY PARIDÆ.

LONG-TAILED TITMOUSE.

ACREDULA CAUDATA (Linnæus).

Dog-tail, Churn, Bottle-tit.

The Long-tailed Titmouse is a resident species, sparingly distributed throughout the wooded portions of the county. After the breeding season the birds are met with in family parties which combine during the winter with flocks of other Tits and Goldcrests.

This species is an early breeder, and the nest, often built in a whitethorn hedge, is frequently completed before the foliage is thick enough to screen it. The white lichens, however, which are interwoven with the moss, producing the effect of light and shade among a mass of twigs, afford protection to what would otherwise be a conspicuous object in a leafless hedge.

Like other Titmice, this bird is a close sitter. Mr. F. Brownsword once received a nest from Mottram St. Andrew, containing ten slightly incubated eggs. The man who cut it out from a thorn hedge informed him that, after carrying it for some distance, he was astonished to see the brooding bird emerge from the entrance-hole and fly away.

GREAT TITMOUSE.

PARUS MAJOR, Linnæus.

Sawfinch, Saw-sharpener, King Charles, Big Tomtit.

This handsome bird is a common resident throughout the county. In Dunham Park and some other

localities it is the most abundant Titmouse, but in most districts it is outnumbered by the Blue Tit. Mr. N. Neave informs us that in the country east of Macclesfield it is rarer than either the Blue or Coal Tit.

The Great Titmouse is by no means entirely dependent upon animal food, being partial to maize, nuts, and the seeds of the sunflower. In our school-days we have often caught it in brick-traps baited with bread.

The number of eggs laid by this bird is sometimes very large, ten or twelve in a clutch being not unusual. On one occasion we found fifteen in a nest in a wall at High Legh; these, however, were possibly the produce of two females. The Great Titmouse is a close sitter, only leaving its eggs when compelled to do so, and even then, if the nest is built in a wall, it will retire to some crevice in the interior, and hiss angrily at the intruder. A bird sitting on ten eggs in a cleft thorn in Dunham Park neither moved nor made a sound until, using a twig as a lever, we raised it from the nest.

COAL TITMOUSE.

PARUS ATER, Linnæus.

The Coal Titmouse is a common resident, less plentiful than the Great and Blue Tits, but more numerous in most localities than the Marsh Tit. In the neighbourhood of Chester, however, Dr. Dobie finds the Marsh Tit the commoner species.¹

During the winter months this bird is much more in evidence than in the breeding season; and it seems probable that the numbers of our resident birds are

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 291.

then augmented by immigrants from other parts of the country.

In autumn, the Coal Titmouse, like its congeners, feeds on the fallen nuts beneath the beeches, but, so far as we have observed, is alone in the habit of plucking the ripe fruit from the trees. The birds do not eat the mast in the tree-tops, but fly with it to the ground, often thirty yards or more from the tree, and there extract the kernel.

MARSH TITMOUSE.

PARUS PALUSTRIS, Linnæus.

As a general rule, the Marsh Titmouse, although a resident, is less plentiful in Cheshire than the Coal Titmouse. Like that species, it is met with most frequently during the winter months.

Flocks consisting solely of Marsh Tits are often seen; and although the bird does associate with other species, it is on the whole less sociable than its congeners.

The nest is generally built in a hole in a tree or rotten stump, but we have found it placed on the earth beneath tree-roots in a hedgebank. When the birds hack out a nesting-hole in dead wood, they usually carry away the chips and drop them from the branches of neighbouring trees and bushes. This act of concealment, however, is not always thorough, for we have seen a considerable litter lying below the nesting-hole from which the birds were busily engaged in removing the chips in large mouthfuls.

At Ince this bird has been observed feeding on the American blight.¹

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 292.

BLUE TITMOUSE.

PARUS CÆRULEUS, Linnæus.

Tomtit, Tom Nowp, Billybiter.

The Blue Titmouse is the best-known member of the family, and is abundant throughout the county. It is even more plentiful during the winter than in the summer months. In cold weather a bone or lump of suet suspended in a tree is an unfailing attraction to these active little birds. Other Tits avail themselves of this food—the Coal and Marsh taking their turn indiscriminately with the Blue,—but all give way if a Great Tit makes its appearance, and concede the first place to the more powerful bird.

The number of insects destroyed by the Blue Titmouse in the breeding season is enormous. A pair at Alderley Edge, which were feeding their young in a hole in an apple-tree, visited the nest with food forty-three times in half an hour.

In common with other species of the genus, the Blue Titmouse is a constant attendant in places where maize is scattered for Pheasants. In the coverts in Dunham Park we have watched the birds carry the maize, grain by grain, into the rhododendron bushes, where, holding it on a branch with one foot, they pecked out the soft part and dropped the remainder to the ground.

FAMILY SITTIDÆ.

NUTHATCH.

SITTA CÆSIA, Wolf.

The Nuthatch, a very local resident, is practically confined to the south-west of the county. Dr. Dobie

states that it nests in the Chester Cemetery, as well as in Eaton Park, where it is not uncommon. It has also been reported to him as occurring at Mollington Hall, Carden, Little Budworth, and Malpas, where the Rev. C. Wolley-Dod finds it abundant all the year round at Edge Hall.¹

Elsewhere in the county the bird is very rare. Brockholes does not include it in his Wirral list, and it is unknown on the Eastern Hills. In the Plain, despite the fact that some of the parks contain much old timber, it is unaccountably rare, and we have only seen two examples—one obtained in winter at Norley on the border of Delamere Forest, and one shot some years ago at Astle by Colonel Dixon, which is now in his collection. The late C. S. Gregson is cited by A. G. More as his authority for the statement that the Nuthatch is numerous in Dunhorn (Dunham) Park;² but although we have for many years constantly frequented the Park at all seasons, we have never met with the bird.

FAMILY TROGLODYTIDÆ.

WREN.

TROGLODYTES PARVULUS, K. L. Koch.

Jenny Wren, Dicky Pug.

The Wren is an abundant resident in every part of the county, being met with as frequently in the bare cloughs among the Hills as on the wooded Plain.

The domed nest is built in a variety of situations; often in a thorn hedge, amongst the twigs growing from the trunk of an oak, or beneath the bank of a

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 292.

² *Ibis*, series II., vol. i., 1865, p. 138.

stream, where it is generally hidden from view by the overhanging turf. The exposed roots of fallen trees and the thatched roofs of sheds are also favourite sites. Mr. F. Brownsword informs us that in 1890 he found a Wren's nest, containing six eggs, inside the old nest of a House Martin beneath the eaves of a building at Prestbury; and Mr. R. Newstead has a note of one at The Dale, Chester, in 1899, which was built in a Swallow's nest. In the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, there is a nest supported between the drooping wing and body of a dead Sparrow Hawk, which was taken from a keeper's gibbet at Carden Park in July 1898. Mr. F. S. Graves saw a nest at Capesthorne in the spring of 1899, built in the head of a Brussels-sprout.¹ In 1898, Coward found an abnormal nest containing eggs in a crevice in the rough bark of an old poplar in Dunham Park. It was cup-shaped, with an arch of nesting material round the entrance-hole, but had no dome, the roof being formed by the bark of the tree. In 1899 an exactly similar nest was built in another part of the trunk of the same tree, which had been blown down during the winter.

FAMILY CETHIDIIDÆ.

TREE CREEPER.

CERTHIA FAMILIARIS, Linnæus.

As a breeding species, the Tree Creeper, although not very common, is generally distributed in the lowlands, and we have observed it in the wooded valleys of the upper Dane and Goyt. In winter it is more frequently met with than in summer, and at this

¹ Cf. Seebohm, *op. cit.* vol. i. p. 508.

season associates with Tits and Golderests, most of the larger flocks of these birds containing one or more Creepers.

When feeding, the Creeper starts at the foot of a tree, sometimes ascending in a spiral course, although the bird often keeps to one side of the trunk. Attaining a considerable height amongst the branches, or even working out to the extremity of one of the larger limbs, it flies downwards in a slanting direction to the foot of another tree.

Mr. R. Newstead has observed the Creeper feeding freely on the common mussel-scale of the apple (*Mytilaspis pomorum*, Bouché).¹

FAMILY MOTACILLIDÆ.

PIED WAGTAIL.

MOTACILLA LUGUBRIS, Temminck.

Watitty, Water Wagtail.

In Cheshire the Pied Wagtail is a partial migrant, only a few birds remaining through the winter. Early in March small flocks of immigrants, recognisable by their clean plumage, may be seen in the ploughed fields and pastures. From then until autumn the bird is plentiful and widely distributed, frequenting farmsteads and brooks in the Hill Country as well as the water-courses of the Plain. Emigration commences in September, and continues through the following month. On November 13th, 1897, there were many birds about the brooks and pit-sides in the neighbourhood of Alderley Edge, presumably passing southward, for a few days later none were to be seen.

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 292.

In 1896 a pair of Pied Wagtails built a nest beneath the metals on the Cheshire Lines Railway near Mobberley Station, over which many trains passed daily. In spite of the fact that the nest was removed several times, owing to the repairing of the permanent way, the birds did not forsake the spot, but succeeded in bringing off their brood.¹

WHITE WAGTAIL.

MOTACILLA ALBA, Linnæus.

The evidence of the occurrence of the White Wagtail in Cheshire is very scanty, but the bird has probably been overlooked owing to its close resemblance to the Pied Wagtail. Brockholes observed a pair of birds near Burton in April 1869.² The late J. Cordeaux, in a letter to Dr. Dobie dated December 15th, 1893, writes:—‘Some few years ago I saw a pair of White Wagtails (*Motacilla alba*) on the Peckforton Hills near Beeston.’³ The late C. S. Gregson states that he has shot the bird on Bidston Hill,⁴ but the slight description he gives appears rather to refer to the Pied Wagtail in autumn plumage.

GREY WAGTAIL.

MOTACILLA MELANOPE, Pallas.

The breeding area of the Grey Wagtail in Cheshire is practically coincident with that of the Dipper, the bird being common on most of the streams in the Hill Country of the East. We have met with it no-

¹ George Leighton, *Field*, vol. lxxxvii. p. 845.

² Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 7.

³ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 293.

⁴ H. E. Smith, *op. cit.* p. 237.

where in greater abundance than on the Dane from its source to Bosley, where it is at once the commonest Wagtail and the most attractive bird that frequents the stream. The Grey Wagtail occasionally nests in the eastern portion of the Plain. In May 1898, Mr. M. Wood found a nest with young on a stream at Cheadle, and Mr. W. H. Peterkin observed a pair which were nesting in a secluded dell on Alderley Edge. In 1899 the latter pair again nested in the same spot.

Mr. N. Neave informs us that the Grey Wagtail arrives at its nesting-quarters in the Hills about the end of February, though we have seen a pair on the Mersey, near Romiley, as late as April 12th.

In autumn the birds descend to the Plain, and from October to March are distributed over the lowlands, where they haunt the rivers and smaller streams. In the West the bird is seldom seen, even in winter. Brockholes observed it only occasionally in Wirral,¹ and Mr. R. Newstead states that it is rare at Ince.²

In winter the Grey Wagtail is, as a rule, unsociable, and we have most frequently met with single birds. Individuals are greatly attached to localities where they have taken up their quarters, and we have on several occasions known a bird to haunt the same spot, day after day, for five weeks.

YELLOW WAGTAIL.

MOTACILLA RAII (Bonaparte).

The Yellow Wagtail is a regular summer visitor, arriving about the third week in April, and leaving about the end of August or beginning of September.

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 7.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 293.

It is met with chiefly in water-meadows and other low-lying situations, and is not uncommon throughout the Cheshire Plain, where it affects the company of the grazing cattle. Although rarer on the Hills, it may be seen occasionally on the upland pastures; and a few pairs nest in the upper part of Longdendale.

When the Yellow Wagtails are pairing, we have seen the male hover like a Kestrel about eighteen inches above the female in the grass below. This species takes insects on the wing in the manner of the Spotted Flycatcher. Mr. J. J. Cash tells us that on the Mersey, near Sale, he has seen at one time six or more birds sallying from the piles in the river bed to take their prey in the air.

We have seen an immature bird, entirely white except for a tinge of yellow on the primaries, and with normally coloured irides, which was shot at Dunham Massey in 1895.

TREE PIPIT.

ANTHUS TRIVIALIS (Linnæus).

Bloodlark, Titlark.

The Tree Pipit arrives in Cheshire about the middle of April, and is generally distributed during the summer months, its characteristic song being a familiar sound in the wooded districts. Although absent from the moorlands, it occurs freely on the hillsides wherever there are plantations. In many of the parks, and in those portions of Delamere Forest where oaks predominate, the Tree Pipit is particularly plentiful. In such situations the Cuckoo usually deposits her egg in the nest of this bird.

MEADOW PIPIT.

ANTHUS PRATENSIS (Linnæus).

Titlark, Moor Peep, Peet Lark.

The Meadow Pipit is an abundant resident, and in summer is found throughout the county. It is nowhere more plentiful than on the bleak moorlands, where it nests up to the summits of the highest hills in company with the Red Grouse and Curlew. It is freely distributed through the meadows and pastures of the Plain, and its nest is often found amongst the star-grass on the sandhills of the coast.

In hard winters the moorlands are deserted; but in the mild winter of 1898-99, Mr. N. Neave saw Meadow Pipits on the hills near the Cat and Fiddle on January 5th, and Mr. F. Nicholson has frequently seen the bird on the moors at Woodhead as late as December 10th. On March 11th, 1899, there were numbers of birds in Longdendale at the level of the reservoirs, but we met with none on the higher ground. It is also absent in winter from many parts of the Plain, but on the Dee Marshes and in the water-meadows bordering the larger rivers it may be found all the year round. In the Mersey Valley, near Sale, we have obtained specimens in every month from October to March.

ROCK PIPIT.

ANTHUS OBSCURUS (Latham).

The sandy coast of Wirral is unsuited to the requirements of the Rock Pipit during the breeding season, and its nest has only been found on the rocky islets of

Hilbre. Brockholes states that he has seen eggs from that locality,¹ and Mr. A. O. Walker found three nests there on May 24th, 1858.² When on Hilbre in May 1894, we saw several pairs of nesting birds on the edge of the low sandstone cliffs.

FAMILY ORIOLIDÆ.

GOLDEN ORIOLE.

ORIOLOUS GALBULA, Linnæus.

There are only two recorded instances of the occurrence of the Golden Oriole in Cheshire. A male was obtained in May 1830, and was preserved in the collection of the Manchester Natural History Society.³ In the late fifties a female was shot at Styal, where it was consorting with a number of Thrushes and about half a dozen birds of its own species.⁴ It is now in the collection of Mr. Bulkeley Allen of Bowdon.

FAMILY LANIIDÆ.

GREAT GREY SHRIKE.

LANIUS EXCUBITOR, Linnæus.

The Great Grey Shrike has occasionally visited Cheshire during the autumn and winter months. The earliest record we have refers to one in the collection of the Manchester Natural History Society, which was shot by J. Moore at Sale.⁵ Byerley, on the authority

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 7.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 294.

³ *Aves Britannicæ: a Systematic Catalogue of British Birds*, p. 7. 1836.

⁴ *Minute-Book of the Manchester Natural History Club* (ms.), Sept. 28, 1863, p. 165. 'Redshank,' *Manchester City News*, July 24, 1875.

⁵ J. Blackwall, *Loudon's Magazine of Natural History*, vol. ii. p. 274. 1829.

of Mr. Grace, gives Whitby Locks as a locality where the bird has been observed,¹ and Mr. L. H. Grindon states that one was seen at Cheadle about 1850.² There is a specimen from Middlewich in the Warrington Museum.

Dr. Dobie cites four occurrences of the species in the Chester district. In December 1886 a bird was captured in a hawk-trap in Delamere Forest, and is now in the Grosvenor Museum; two others were shot, at Eaton Kennels and Stanlow respectively; and one was obtained by Mr. Beckett at Dodleston on November 9th, 1893.³

RED-BACKED SHRIKE.

LANIUS COLLURIO, Linnæus.

The Red-backed Shrike is an irregular summer visitor to Cheshire. Mr. H. E. Smith records a nest near Claughton in 1863;⁴ and Brockholes, writing in 1874, stated that 'a pair of these birds reared five young ones a few years ago near Bidston.'⁵ Mr. Sidney Cummings informed Dr. Dobie that he had occasionally seen the bird in the fields by the Dee Cop, Chester; and Mr. R. Newstead found it nesting at Ince in 1883.⁶ Mr. W. Bell tells us that a pair bred at Leasowe in 1892.

In all these instances the Red-backed Shrike has occurred near the coastline, and we know of only one occasion on which it has been observed inland. Mr. H. H. Corbett informs us that a pair nested, about the year 1869, in a roadside hedge at Alderley.

¹ Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 11.

² *Country Rambles*, 2nd edit. p. 286.

³ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 294.

⁴ Smith, *op. cit.* p. 243.

⁵ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 5.

⁶ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 294.

FAMILY AMPELIDÆ.

WAXWING.

AMPELIS GARRULUS, Linnæus.

This handsome wanderer visits Great Britain in large numbers at irregular intervals, and is then more plentiful in the east than in the west of the country. In the invasions of the winters of 1849-50 and 1863-64, the bird reached Cheshire; and in 1892-93, when many birds were recorded from different parts of England, one was shot a few miles from the county boundary—at Connah's Quay, Flintshire.¹

In January 1850, Mr. Henry Johnson recorded the occurrence of a Waxwing in Wirral,² and Mr. F. Nicholson informs us that several examples were obtained near Bowdon in the same winter. Towards the close of the year 1863, two birds were observed at Moreton, one of which was shot, and preserved by J. Leyland of Liverpool; and on the 23rd of February 1864, another was caught under a riddle, baited with berries of the dog-rose, in a garden at Liscard Vale. Before its capture, the bird was feeding on the fallen berries, and allowed a man to approach within a few yards before it took wing.³

We have seen an adult Waxwing which was shot at Hulmewalfield, near Congleton, in the winter of 1893-94. There is a specimen in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, from Tattenhall, but the date of its capture is not known.

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 294.

² *Zoologist*, ser. I. vol. viii. p. 2769. 1850.

³ N. Cooke, *Zoologist*, ser. I. vol. xxii. p. 9023. 1864.

FAMILY MUSCICAPIDÆ.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER.

MUSCICAPA GRISOLA, Linnæus.

Old Man, Wall Robin.

The Spotted Flycatcher is a summer visitor, usually arriving about the middle of May. It is generally distributed in the lowlands, and occurs in the valleys of the Goyt and Dane, and in many of the wooded cloughs on the hillsides.

This bird sometimes rears its young in the nests of other species. On May 31st, 1857, Mr. R. Holland observed a Spotted Flycatcher leave the half-finished nest of a House Martin which had been built under the eaves of his house at Mobberley. On ascending to the nest, he found that the Flycatchers had constructed a nest on the foundations commenced by the Martins, and had laid one egg. Three weeks later, he noted that the Martins had recommenced building operations, and had nearly finished the outside of the nest, the Flycatcher's nest being still within, but empty. Mr. Holland did not observe whether the Flycatchers had brought off a brood, or had been driven away by the Martins, but it is clear that three weeks after the Flycatcher's egg was in the nest the Martins were again in possession.¹

In this instance a nest was superadded by the Flycatchers to the foundations built by the Martins; but in the following case, noticed by the Rev. C. Wolley-Dod at Malpas, no nest was constructed by the Flycatchers, a Swallow's nest of the previous year being used without

¹ *Science Gossip*, vol. iv. p. 89. April 1868.

any addition. Mr. Wolley-Dod writes:—‘I have now in one of my glass-roofed porches a Swallow’s nest attached to the wall, in which a brood of Swallows were reared last year; it is now occupied by a brood of Spotted Flycatchers. The situation shelters the nest from the weather, and I do not think any alteration or addition was made to the nest by the Flycatchers.’¹

In 1899, Mr. F. S. Graves found a Spotted Flycatcher’s nest at Alderley Edge which had been built inside the nest of a Song Thrush, there being two eggs of the latter bird beneath the nesting material added by the Flycatchers.

The Spotted Flycatcher, like the Robin, Wren, and Swallow, is considered sacred in some of the country districts, and its nest and eggs are not molested by the schoolboy.²

PIED FLYCATCHER.

MUSCICAPA ATRICAPILLA, Linnæus.

The Pied Flycatcher has been occasionally observed in Cheshire, but only as a passing migrant. Brockholes saw one in a wood at Burton on April 30th, 1867,³ and another was noted at Thornleigh, near Chester, on May 5th, 1884.⁴ On the same day in the following year Coward watched a male in a covert at Birkin Heath, Ashley.

Dr. Dobie mentions a specimen that was obtained at Hoole, near Chester,⁵ and we have examined another that was shot in the garden of Northenden Rectory.

¹ *Field*, vol. xc. p. 307.

² R. Holland, *Glossary of Words used in the County of Chester*, 1884-86, p. 249.

⁴ *Field*, vol. lxiii. p. 651.

³ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 5.

⁵ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 295.

Mr. Gillett of Stockport informs us that two examples have passed through his hands—one from Vernon Park, Stockport, and the other from Adswood. A male in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, was obtained at Eaton by Mr. H. Garland on April 16th, 1894.

FAMILY HIRUNDINIDÆ.

SWALLOW.

HIRUNDO RUSTICA, Linnæus.

This well-known summer visitor usually arrives in Cheshire about the end of the third week in April, although in some years we have seen it as early as the 5th of the month. The birds begin to flock, preparatory to departure, early in September, and leave gradually during that month and the first half of October. In the mild autumn of 1896, Swallows and House Martins were observed in North Cheshire as late as the 15th of November. During summer the Swallow is universally distributed, and may be seen hawking for insects on the bleak hilltops as commonly as in the cultivated Plain.

In late springs, Swallows are often driven to take refuge from the severe weather in buildings and out-houses, where many die from cold and hunger. In May 1886, hundreds perished in Cheshire.

In 1872 a white Swallow was seen on the wing at Delamere;¹ and in 1867 an albino was shot at Gayton, where it had been observed in the nest with three normally plumaged birds.²

¹ *Field*, vol. xl. p. 184.

² D. M'Isaac, *Field*, vol. xxx. p. 286.

HOUSE MARTIN.

CHELIDON URBICA (Linnæus).

The House Martin is a regular summer visitor to Cheshire, arriving a few days later than the Swallow. Most of the birds leave during the early part of October, but laggards may be seen until the end of this month or the beginning of November. This species haunts the same situations as the Swallow, but is not quite so common. House Martins suffered greatly in the severe spring of 1886, and for some years afterwards only visited us in diminished numbers; but lately they have recovered their position.

In common with many insectivorous birds, the Martin has grown rarer in several places owing to the inordinate increase of the House Sparrow. We have met with several cases where the Sparrow has ousted the weaker bird and appropriated its nest. In this connection, it is a significant fact that at Tarporley, where Sparrows are rigorously destroyed, Mr. R. J. Howard has counted thirty-two occupied nests of the House Martin under eighteen yards of eaves.¹

SAND MARTIN.

COTILE RIPARIA (Linnæus).

The Sand Martin is one of the earliest spring migrants to this country, but it is seldom seen in Cheshire before the middle of April. During its sojourn with us it frequents the meres and rivers in large numbers, and is met with in all parts of the

¹ Mitchell, *Birds of Lancashire*, 2nd edit. p. 57.

county. The birds commence to flock at the end of July, and leave gradually during August and September, although in some years a few may be met with as late as the middle of October.

In August, Sand Martins congregate in vast flocks in different parts of the Mersey Valley between Stockport and Warrington, and we have seen them lining the telegraph wires in thousands or hawking for insects over the low-lying meadows. Describing one of these flocks which he observed in 1893, near Wythenshawe, Mr. J. J. Cash writes:—‘On August 12th, the neighbourhood was inundated with Sand Martins. I never saw so many before. The air was full of beating wings and clamorous twitterings. The birds covered a wire railing a hundred yards or more in length, until it resembled a thick cable without a flaw. Their heads were all in one direction, pointing to the west. The surrounding trees were filled, and the birds flew in and out amongst the foliage of one large chestnut like bees around a hive. They must have numbered incalculable thousands, and the district in question evidently was for some reason, in 1893, the rendezvous for Martins over a very wide area. The flock haunted the district for ten days. A foretaste of autumn at the end of July no doubt precipitated the assembling, but the return of intense heat in August evidently checked the departure. However, on the bank of the Mersey, near Sale, on the evening of the 22nd of the month, I saw what I took to be the same concourse again—for surely two such multitudes could not exist in close proximity! The whole expanse of sky was speckled and dotted with birds flying at a great altitude, and bearing slowly but surely westward, the direction Swallows and Martins invariably take when leaving

this district. As darkness fell I still watched this vast army of migrants in steady flight high above the river.'

Sand Martins nest in colonies, usually excavating their holes in the banks of streams or in sand or gravel pits, but the birds sometimes utilise the softer strata of the red sandstone rock in quarries and railway cuttings. Mr. R. Newstead states that about sixty pairs took possession of such a situation in 1892 in the Ship Canal cutting at Ince.¹ The depth of the hole varies, without apparent relation to the geological formation. In the alluvium of the Mersey banks, near Sale, we have seen nests only four inches from the mouth of the hole, whilst others near to them were beyond arm's reach.

Whilst the birds are excavating, they roost in the unfinished tunnels, from which we have taken them at night. In severe weather the birds sometimes take refuge in the nesting-holes. In the cold spring of 1886, which was as fatal to this species as to the Swallow and House Martin, Oldham took the remains of fifteen birds and some broken egg-shells from a single hole in the bank of the Mersey at Sale.²

FAMILY FRINGILLIDÆ.—SUB-FAMILY FRINGILLINÆ.

GREENFINCH.

LIGURINUS CHLORIS (Linnæus).

Green Linnet.

From spring to autumn the Greenfinch abounds in the lowlands, and is found at a considerable elevation on the Hills, provided there are thorn hedges or bushes in which its nest may be placed. Brockholes only occasionally observed a flock in Wirral during the

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 296.

² *Naturalist*, 1886, p. 214.

winter months, and was of opinion that the majority of the birds went elsewhere at that season.¹ Our experience agrees with his, in regard to North and Mid Cheshire, where in most winters the bird, if not entirely absent, is seldom met with.

In districts in the north of the county, where large quantities of garden produce are grown for the Manchester market, the Greenfinch is looked upon with disfavour. It holds its own, however, in spite of persecution, and no nest is commoner than this bird's in the evergreens and hedgerows. In Dunham Park and other places where it is not molested, the Greenfinch is sociable in the breeding season, and many nests are frequently built in a restricted area.

HAWFINCH.

COCCOTHAUSTES VULGARIS, Pallas.

Twenty years ago the Hawfinch was a rare bird in Cheshire, but it is now a fairly common resident throughout the Plain. Brockholes does not include the bird in his list; at the present time, however, it nests annually in Wirral, and is steadily increasing in numbers in that district. We have no records from the Hill Country, although, if the bird continues to extend its breeding area, it will probably be met with ere long in the wooded valleys.

Since 1860, when the Hawfinch was first recorded as a Cheshire bird,² it has been frequently reported from various localities, and is now plentiful in some districts where a few years ago it was unknown. Owing to its shyness, the bird is seldom seen, except in summer,

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 8.

² J. J. Jones, *Field*, vol. xv. p. 199.

when its overpowering love for green peas attracts it to gardens, where it does considerable damage. Mr. R. Newstead states that a young bird taken at Ledsham subsisted almost entirely for eighteen months upon dry peas.¹

The Rev. C. Wolley-Dod gives the following interesting account of the Hawfinch as observed by him at Edge Hall, Malpas:—‘They have bred here for more than twenty years, ever since I came to live here. I suspect they breed in the high trees, but I have never looked for their nest. They destroy many peas in the pod, but the most remarkable evidence of their presence is beneath the yew-trees. When the berries get nearly ripe, about September, the ground beneath them becomes covered with small twigs with one or two unripe berries on each. I used to think it was done by squirrels, but I have now become certain it is by Hawfinches. If I get under the tree stealthily, I can generally hear their shrill wee chirp. There are two large yew-trees under which the twigs are strewn so thick that I have had more than a wheelbarrowful swept up at once, and in a fortnight they will be as thick again.’¹

GOLDFINCH.

CARDUELIS ELEGANS, Stephens.

Red Linnet, Jack Nicker, Nicker Nocker.

Unlike the last species, which is steadily gaining ground in Cheshire, the Goldfinch as a resident is rapidly becoming rarer, and has already been exterminated in most districts. The reclamation of waste lands has curtailed its haunts, and persistent persecu-

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 296.

tion by bird-catchers has been instrumental in further reducing its numbers. Immigrants are occasionally seen in winter in districts where the bird is extinct as a breeding species.

Even so long ago as 1864, the Goldfinch was apparently rare in Wirral, for the late C. S. Gregson considered the occurrence of a nest at Bidston as worthy of note.¹ Brockholes, writing ten years later, described the bird as a scarce resident, and added that bird-catchers told him a good many visited Wirral in autumn.² It is doubtful whether the bird now nests in Wirral, although Mr. W. E. Sharp sometimes sees flocks in winter in the neighbourhood of Ledsham.³

The Rev. C. Wolley-Dod states that the Goldfinch still breeds, although but sparingly, in the gardens at Edge Hall, Malpas, where it is abundant in the winter. Elsewhere in West Cheshire it is rare, but has been noted at Ince, Manley, the Dee Cop, Saltney, and Combermere.³ Mr. John Platt, who has eggs from Shavington-cum-Gresty, informs us that in that locality the Goldfinch was formerly common, but is now rare owing to the depredations of Nantwich bird-catchers.

In Mid Cheshire the Goldfinch is now seldom met with in the summer. Mr. S. Radcliffe informs us that he saw a nest in 1892 in an apple-tree at Holmes Chapel, and that Mr. John Moss of Ashton-under-Lyne possesses a nest which was taken at Mobberley in 1890. Mr. K. H. Jones writes us that in July 1895 two birds were obtained at Plumbley. In the valley of the Bollin, near Bowdon, the bird is still taken, although very rarely, by bird-catchers in winter. We have seen it there in hard weather, feeding with Linnets on the

¹ Smith, *op. cit.* p. 245.

² Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 8.

³ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 297.

thistles which protruded through the snow. Mr. F. Nicholson tells us that on several occasions he has trapped passing migrants which were attracted by the call-notes of captive birds in his aviary at Altrincham, and suggests that the Goldfinch, though seldom observed, occurs more often than is generally supposed.

SISKIN.

CARDUELIS SPINUS (Linnæus).

Aberdevine.

This active little Finch is only known in Cheshire as a winter visitor; sometimes occurring in considerable numbers, though in most years it is rare or entirely absent. The birds are almost invariably met with in compact flocks in alders and birches, feeding upon the seeds, when their tit-like actions and pleasing twitter cannot fail to attract attention.

The Siskin is not mentioned by Brockholes in his Wirral list, and Dr. Dobie has never observed it in the Chester district; but Mr. W. E. Sharp states that in the winter of 1872-73 it was abundant in the birches at Ledsham; and a specimen, now in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, was shot at Ince Hall in November 1891. The Rev. C. Wolley-Dod has often seen flocks among the alders at Malpas, and Mr. R. Newstead, senior, has two specimens which were obtained at Tarporley.¹

On December 24th, 1887, Oldham watched a couple of Siskins feeding in an alder swamp near Somerford, and we have seen others that were obtained at Oulton, Compstall, and Marton. There is one in the Warrington Museum which was shot at Antrobus in November

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 297.

1894. Bowker, a bird-catcher, who often plies his trade in the Bollin Valley, tells us that a few years ago he saw a small clump of alders, near Castle Mill, literally covered with 'Aberdevines.' Mr. J. Platt watched a flock feeding in a birch-tree on Alderley Edge in the winter of 1896-97.

The Siskin was abundant in North Cheshire in the winter of 1897-98. We saw birds on several occasions at Handforth, Monks' Heath, Siddington, and Ashley; and Mr. J. J. Cash observed a flock in Toft Park, near Knutsford.

HOUSE SPARROW.

PASSER DOMESTICUS (Linnæus).

Spadger.

Except in the bleaker portions of the Hill Country, the House Sparrow is an all too common resident in Cheshire. In the Hill Country it is to a large extent replaced by the Chaffinch, although even here a few birds frequent the isolated farmsteads.

So long ago as the middle of the last century, the Sparrow was regarded with disfavour by the agriculturist; for we find in the accounts of the chapel wardens of Holmes Chapel that in 1743 four shillings and five-pence was paid for killing Sparrows, and in 1772 ten shillings and sixpence was expended upon a new sparrow-net.¹ With the advance of cultivation and the foolish destruction of its natural enemies by the game-preserve, the Sparrow has increased to an alarming extent; and although comparatively little corn is grown in Cheshire, the bird is a force that has

¹ T. Worthington-Barlow, *A Sketch of the History of the Church at Holmes Chapel, Cheshire*, 1853.

to be taken into serious consideration by the farmer. It is true that the nestlings are fed with insects, but through the greater part of the year the bird feeds upon grain. Even in the breeding season the Sparrow is encroaching upon the food supply of purely insectivorous species. With obtrusive familiarity, the bird monopolises the scraps spread in suburban gardens in winter, frequently to the exclusion of more deserving species, and repays its benefactors by pulling to pieces the crocuses and early spring flowers.

The untidy nest is usually placed on houses or buildings, but often in the branches of orchard trees or hollies, corn-stacks, holes in trees, disused Magpies' nests, and other diverse situations. Not only does the Sparrow rear its young in the nests of House Martins, but it frequently uses these nests as roosting-places in the winter.

White, or partially white, Sparrows have often been obtained in Cheshire, and a pale buff variety appears to be not uncommon.

TREE SPARROW.

PASSER MONTANUS (Linnæus).

Copper-head.

Unlike the previous species, the Tree Sparrow is very local in Cheshire, although it has probably been overlooked in some districts. It has been noticed more frequently in Wirral and the west of the county than elsewhere. Dr. Dobie mentions Hooton, Upton, Backford, and Ince as localities where it has nested, and states that it is not uncommon on the north side of Chester.¹ In May 1894 we came across a large colony

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 298.

in an old sandstone quarry at Burton; most of the nests—constructed of grass stems and wool, and lined with a profusion of fowls' feathers—were placed in fissures in the rock, but two were built amongst the matted roots of gorse-bushes at the top of the rock face. In each of the clutches we examined, one egg was markedly lighter and less profusely spotted than the others.

The late J. F. Robinson stated that the Tree Sparrow was not uncommon in the hilly districts near Frodsham, where he often found nests, either in hollow trees—apple and pear as a rule—or amongst the loose sticks at the base of Rooks' and Magpies' nests. In one case which came under his notice, a swarm of bees took possession of the nesting-hole and destroyed the young birds.¹ Mr. H. H. Corbett tells us that he has found the Tree Sparrow nesting at Bramhall, and Mr. W. H. Peterkin has eggs from that locality. A few pairs nest in the old timber in Dunham Park, and the bird probably breeds in similar situations in other parts of the Plain.

In winter the Tree Sparrow is more generally diffused, at any rate in the north of the county, and we have frequently seen it feeding in farmyards or by the roadside in company with House Sparrows, Chaffinches, and Yellow Ammers.

CHAFFINCH.

FRINGILLA CŒLEBS, Linnæus.

Flackie, Pied Finch, Pydie, Twinkl, Spink, Pitefinch.

The Chaffinch is one of our commonest residents, and is found abundantly throughout the county, nesting

¹ *Manchester City News*, October 14, 1882

even in the fir plantations and small clumps of trees high up on the hills of the East. In winter the bird is eminently sociable, and large flocks may be seen in the open fields, or feeding with Sparrows and Yellow Ammers in the farmyards. About the farmsteads in the Hill Country it is the commonest passerine bird, far outnumbering the House Sparrow. These flocks break up during February and March, and in mild weather we have heard the cheery song of the Chaffinch as early as February 13th.

The exquisitely neat nest is generally placed in a whitethorn hedge, or in the fork of a birch or fruit tree, the mosses and lichens of which it is constructed harmonising with its surroundings. Incongruous materials are, however, sometimes used, and we once found a nest at Plumbley principally composed of old newspaper. Exceptionally, the bird builds at a considerable height in a forest tree, a nest which we saw near Goyts Bridge being placed on a lateral branch of an oak at least forty feet from the ground.

On April 3rd, 1884, Oldham saw two Chaffinches fighting on a garden lawn at Sale. The combatants were surrounded by half a dozen other birds, passively watching the fray. Presently the bird which was obviously getting the better of its opponent retired, and its place was taken by another. After a short scuffle the aggressor and the onlookers flew away, leaving the victim, a hen bird, motionless upon the ground. It was in a pitiable condition, its plumage being saturated with the morning dew, and its head and neck stripped of feathers; but after being placed for a couple of hours before a fire, it recovered sufficiently to fly away when taken into the open air.

Although it does not display the dexterity of the

Flycatchers and Warblers, the Chaffinch, in common with the House Sparrow and other Finches, often captures insects on the wing. We have watched a number of birds by the side of a wooded stream pass repeatedly from bank to bank in order to snap up the insects which were flying above the water. In July too, when the oaks are often almost leafless owing to the depredations of the green tortrix (*Tortrix viridana*, Linnæus), family parties of Chaffinches frequent the trees to feed upon the moths, which they catch upon the wing.

BRAMBLING.

FRINGILLA MONTIFRINGILLA, Linnæus.

Flat Finch.

The Brambling is a winter visitor whose numbers vary in relation to the severity of the season. In hard winters the bird is fairly plentiful, frequenting beech-woods, and in company with other Finches resorting to farmyards for food. It is often shot on account of its attractive plumage; and the cases of stuffed birds, so common in cottages and farmhouses, nearly always contain one or two specimens.

During October the Brambling arrives in large numbers on the north-east coast of England, but it is seldom met with in Cheshire before January. In 1883, however, Mr. R. Newstead, senior, saw Bramblings at Ince early in the autumn.¹ Throughout the month of November, in 1898, we observed numbers of these birds consorting with Chaffinches, at Alderley Edge and Capesthorpe; but although we often searched, we

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 298.

saw nothing of them after December 4th. The Rev. C. Wolley-Dod states that he generally sees flocks at Edge towards the end of winter,¹ and our experience in the north of the county corresponds with his, for we have met with the bird more often in January than in any other month.

Brockholes only observed the Brambling in Wirral during March,² but it is possible that he overlooked it in other months, as Coward saw a solitary bird on January 24th, 1897, feeding along high-water mark on the Lancashire shore at Blundell Sands. The latest date on which we have seen the Brambling in Cheshire is the 1st of April. On that day, in 1886, we caught a bird in a sparrow-net at Northenden.

The late T. W. Barlow, writing in 1846, stated that the Brambling had largely decreased in the neighbourhood of Holmes Chapel, where it was formerly common.³

LINNET.

LINOTA CANNABINA (Linnæus).

Brown Linnet.

The same influences that have caused the decrease of the Goldfinch—reclamation of waste land and the depredations of the bird-catchers—have affected the status of the Linnet in Cheshire. It is now almost unknown in the Plain as a breeding species. Mr. M. Wood informs us, however, that small flocks of Linnets arrive at Cheadle early in April, a few pairs nesting in the gorse bushes and thickets; and Mr. C. J. Edmondson has eggs in his collection which he took at Lymm in

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 298.

² Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 8.

³ *Zoologist*, ser. i. vol. iv. p. 1548.

1873. Mr. J. Platt tells us that the bird still breeds at Shavington-cum-Gresty, but it is much rarer than formerly. It may still be met with in the flat country between Nantwich and Audlem, where we have seen several pairs in the month of May.

Brockholes described the Linnet as 'an abundant resident in Wirral';¹ and though it has probably decreased in numbers during the last twenty-five years, it still nests in many places along the coast.

Among the gorse bushes on the hillsides in the East, the Linnet maintains a footing, and we have met with it in the breeding season at Wincle, Bosley, and Higher Sutton; and Mr. N. Neave says that a few pairs nest near Rainow. Mr. S. Radcliffe informs us that, though he still occasionally finds the nest near Staleybridge, the bird is not so common as it was ten or twenty years ago; but in the district between Mottram and Godley it breeds regularly, building as often in thorn-bushes as in gorse.

In winter the Linnet is generally diffused, consorting with Chaffinches in the hedgerows and pastures, and its twittering notes often call attention to straggling flocks flying high overhead.

LESSER REDPOLL.

LINOTA RUFESCENS (Vieillot).

Jitty, Chaddy, Grey Bob.

The Lesser Redpoll, although it cannot be considered a common bird, breeds throughout the Cheshire lowlands; whilst in some districts in the Hill Country it is decidedly plentiful. In some places, such as Whaley

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 8.

Bridge, where the Redpoll is common, the broods combine in early autumn; and we have often seen them feeding on the seeds of *Hieracium* and other composite plants which abound on railway embankments and waste ground. During the winter months small flocks of Redpolls may be met with in Wirral and all parts of the Plain, where many are taken by bird-catchers to supply the demand for this species as a cage-bird.

The nest is often placed in a thorn hedge, an alder or birch tree, and sometimes in a bush at the side of a pit. At Higher Sutton we once found one which was artfully concealed in a tuft of leaves at the extremity of a long brier.

TWITE.

LINOTA FLAVIROSTRIS (Linnæus).

Moor Linnet.

As a breeding species in Cheshire, the Twite is now confined to the Hill Country of the East. It is plentiful on the moorlands of Longdendale, and Mr. S. Radcliffe informs us that it breeds freely on the higher ground in the neighbourhood of the Swineshaw reservoirs. The bird is common on all the grouse-moors of the Derbyshire border, and we have even seen it in the breeding season on the pastures near Wincle. John Rowbottom, an old gamekeeper, has shown us Twites captured by him on Werneth Low, near Hyde, where he assures us the bird breeds every year on a patch of rough heathy ground.

The Twite was fairly abundant at Carrington before the Moss was reclaimed, and it probably nested in former times on many of the low-lying mosses in

Cheshire. We used to find nests at Carrington in the thick growth of ling that fringed the moss-ditches.

In winter the Twite forsakes the higher moors; and though possibly it occurs on the Plain at this season, we have no positive evidence of the fact; and the bird has never been recorded from Wirral at any season.

When the birds are pairing in spring, we have watched the male showing-off before the female. Perched on a stone wall or heap of turf, he repeatedly opens and depresses his wings in order to display the rose-red feathers of the rump.

BULLFINCH.

PYRRHULA EUROPEA, Vieillot.

The Bullfinch, a fairly common resident in the lowlands of Cheshire, often escapes observation owing to its shy and retiring habits, for during the greater part of the year it courts the seclusion of the dense woods and thickets. It is, naturally, rarer on the Eastern Hills, although Mr. N. Neave has observed it occasionally at Rainow in winter, and Mr. K. H. Jones informs us that in the neighbourhood of Disley it is not uncommon in the autumn.

In spring the Bullfinch becomes bolder, and by feeding on the fruit-buds does considerable damage in orchards and gardens. When attacking an apple or pear tree the birds commence operations at the junction of a branch and the trunk, and working systematically outwards, destroy every fruit-bud on the thicker part of the branch, leaving those at the extremities of the slender twigs untouched. They become so engrossed while thus engaged, that they may be readily

approached, and many fall easy victims to the gardener's gun.

The nest is usually well concealed in a thick hedge or evergreen bush in some secluded situation; but Mr. W. H. Peterkin has eggs in his collection which he took from a nest in a thin whitethorn hedge by the side of the highroad at Alderley Edge.

CROSSBILL.

LOXIA CURVIROSTRA, Linnæus.

At irregular intervals flocks of Crossbills have occurred in the winter months in the Cheshire woodlands. About the year 1834 or 1835, a flock visited the woods at Twemlow, near Holmes Chapel. Several of the birds, with characteristic tameness, allowed themselves to be captured while feeding on the seeds of conifers, by means of a horsehair noose fastened to the end of a fishing-rod.¹ Although the Crossbill is not included in Brockholes' list, it has occurred on at least one occasion in Wirral; Captain Congreve having a specimen in his collection which was shot in the fir-woods at Burton in January 1839.²

The numerous larches in and about the forest at Delamere offer attractions to these rare visitors, and they have been more frequently observed in this district than elsewhere. On January 22nd, 1889, Mr. W. J. Beaumont saw a flock of about twenty birds in a larch plantation at Vale Royal;³ and in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, there are several examples shot by Mr. A. Cookson at Oakmere in the winters of 1889 and 1891.

¹ T. W. Barlow, ms.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 300.

³ *Naturalist*, 1889, p. 102.

SUB-FAMILY EMBERIZINÆ.

CORN BUNTING.

EMBERIZA MILIARIA, Linnæus.

The Corn Bunting, a very local resident in Cheshire, is restricted during the breeding season to the Wirral coast and the low-lying meadow-land of the Mersey Valley between Stockport and Warrington. In Wirral, Brockholes described it as common during spring and summer in such places as Wallasey and the enclosed portions of the Dee Marshes.¹ We have observed it at Parkgate, and Dr. Dobie records it from the Dee Cop and Saltney.² In the water-meadows of the Mersey Valley the bird is abundant, and in recent years it has invaded the tract of cultivated land which has replaced Carrington Moss. The absence of the bird from the hill pastures of East Cheshire is difficult to explain; for it is fairly plentiful in similar situations in the neighbourhood of Buxton, Castleton, and Chapel-en-le-Frith, a few miles beyond the Derbyshire border.

The Corn Bunting is seldom met with in winter, and Brockholes considered it absent from Wirral at that season.¹ Examples, however, have been obtained at Ince and Aldford,² and we have seen one that was shot out of a flock at High Legh in the winter of 1892-93.

The monotonous song commences early in spring, and continues until late in summer; we have heard the unmistakable notes as late as the 12th of August.

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 7.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 301.

YELLOW BUNTING.

EMBERIZA CITRINELLA, Linnæus.

*Yellow-hammer, Goldfinch, Goldie, Golden Amber,
Scribbling Lark.*

The Yellow Bunting or Yellow Ammer, the commonest of the Buntings, is one of the most familiar of our Cheshire birds, being plentiful everywhere in the lowlands, and on the Hills up to the edge of the moors. In winter it frequents stubbles and farmyards in company with Chaffinches and Sparrows, being as much in evidence at that season as in summer.

In Cheshire this species is commonly called the 'Goldfinch,' whereas the Goldfinch (*Carduelis elegans*, Stephens) is as generally known as the 'Red Linnet.' Unsubstantiated reports of the occurrence of the rarer bird should, therefore, always be received with caution.

CIRL BUNTING.

EMBERIZA CIRLUS, Linnæus.

[There is no satisfactory evidence of the occurrence of the Cirl Bunting in Cheshire. Mr. Graham Renshaw saw a bird in the Mersey meadows near Sale on April 12th, 1899, which he believed to be a Cirl Bunting, and recorded the fact at the time.¹ On June 16th he caught sight of another bird at Dunham Massey which he thought was similar to the one he had seen at Sale, but he was not absolutely satisfied as to the identity of either;² and, failing further information, we think it inadvisable to include this species in the Cheshire list.]

¹ *Zoologist*, ser. IV. vol. iii. p. 222.

² *Ibid.* p. 418.

REED BUNTING.

EMBERIZA SCHÆNICLUS, Linnæus.

Blackcap, Pit Sparrow.

The reedy margins of the meres and the coarse herbage and undergrowth which fringe many of the marl-pits are favourite nesting-places of the Reed Bunting, the bird being abundant during summer in such situations throughout the Cheshire lowlands. In the Hill Country, where the conditions are less favourable, it may be met with occasionally in marshy places. Although the majority leave us in autumn, odd birds may be seen throughout the winter.

Few birds are so handsome as a male Reed Bunting in his nuptial dress, and his beautiful plumage is never seen to better advantage than when, clinging to a tall reed or withy, he utters his stammering song. Like many birds that build upon the ground, the female when disturbed will frequently endeavour to lure an intruder from the vicinity of the nest, by tumbling along the ground for several yards with trailing wings.

SNOW BUNTING.

PLECTROPHENAX NIVALIS (Linnæus).

Mountain Bunting.

The Snow Bunting visits Cheshire occasionally in severe winters, and is then met with more frequently on the hills of the East than elsewhere. Brockholes describes it as 'a rather scarce winter visitor' to Wirral.¹ Mr. N. Cooke records that one was captured

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 7.

at Leasowe in December 1866,¹ and Dr. Dobie that another was taken on the sandhills at New Brighton.² Probably it is not an infrequent visitor to the Cheshire shore in hard weather, for it has often been noticed on the Welsh coast between Bagillt and the Great Orme,² and on the Lancashire seaboard between Formby and Liverpool. In exceptionally severe weather during the winter of 1893-94, when the beach was covered with drift ice, Coward saw a flock of eight or ten birds feeding along high-water mark at Blundell Sands on the Lancashire side of the Mersey Estuary; and in January 1896 Mr. R. H. R. Brocklebank shot one on Burton Marsh.

The Snow Bunting has seldom been observed upon the Cheshire Plain. We have seen one that was shot when feeding with Corn Buntings at High Legh in the winter of 1892-93, and there is an example from Antrobus in the Warrington Museum. Mr. H. H. Corbett saw, in a bird-stuffer's shop at Cheadle Hulme, several Snow Buntings which had been shot in that district. In the cold winter of 1880-81, the late J. F. Robinson had a small flock under observation for two or three days in the neighbourhood of Frodsham, out of which he snared two birds with horsehair nooses. The Snow Buntings were feeding in company with Chaffinches, Bramblings, and Yellow Ammers; and Robinson noticed that when disturbed, unlike their companions, they never perched on a tree or bush, but alighted again on the ground after a short flight. The captured birds were recognised as Snow Buntings by an old ditcher, from which Robinson inferred that the species had occurred more frequently in that district than he had supposed.³

Occasionally the Snow Bunting occurs in some

¹ *Journal of the Liverpool Naturalists' Field Club*, 1867, p. 104.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 302. ³ *Manchester City News*, August 19, 1882.

numbers on the Longdendale moors, where it has many times been recognised feeding with other Finches in the farmyards. The bird has been met with on Werneth Low, near Hyde, in hard winters. In the same season that Robinson observed the flock at Frodsham, an old gamekeeper, John Rowbottom, noticed several flocks frequenting the Low, one of which numbered more than a hundred birds. He secured no less than thirty-five, several of which he ate, finding them very palatable. Mr. B. R. S. Pemberton tells us that he met with a flock in the cold February of 1895, on the moors near Taxal.

When the rocky hilltops are dotted with patches of snow, the plumage of the Snow Bunting, so conspicuous in flight, is very protective immediately the bird alights. Coward—who has frequently observed these birds in company with Twites on the Cumberland Fells—has noticed that when the flocks alight, the Twites are fairly conspicuous, but the Buntings seem to disappear at once. This is no doubt partly accounted for by the fact that the Buntings endeavour to take advantage of the inequalities of the ground; but even at a short distance it is difficult to distinguish them from the small flecks and patches of snow amongst the rocks.

FAMILY STURNIDÆ.

STARLING.

STURNUS VULGARIS, Linnæus.

Shepster, Stare.

Few birds exhibit greater powers of adaptation to a varied environment than the Starling, which is equally at home in thickly populated districts, in the most secluded woodlands, and in the cliffs of the coast. In

Cheshire it is everywhere abundant, and has undoubtedly increased within recent years.

Starlings are eminently sociable, many pairs often nesting in close proximity, and flocks are met with at all seasons of the year. During autumn and winter these flocks resort each night to a common rendezvous in a reed-bed or plantation, where they roost in countless thousands. A pheasant-covert at Ashton-on-Mersey, principally composed of Austrian firs whose dense foliage afforded a warm shelter for the birds, was for some years a favourite haunt. Although a few birds might be found roosting in ivy and evergreens in different parts of the district, practically all the Starlings within a radius of five or six miles of Ashton congregated there nightly. Their numbers, roughly estimated, exceeded one hundred thousand. From the time when the light began to fade until dusk, compact flocks, numbering from fifty to two hundred birds, might be seen flying in a bee-line for the covert, from every direction. These flocks amalgamated as they approached the roosting-place, and before settling for the night wheeled in dense masses high above the tree-tops, going through a series of aerial evolutions with military precision. For some time after settling, especially if the night were light, the birds kept up an incessant chatter, the combined voices of thousands sounding like surf breaking on a shingly beach. We have crept into the covert on a dark night when all was quiet, except for an occasional scuffle when a bird in altering its position jostled its closely packed neighbours from their perch. But when we struck a match or made a sudden noise, the air was filled with hundreds of bewildered birds, which in the first moments of confusion blundered in the darkness against us and the surrounding bushes. When they

rose above the tree-tops, the whirr of innumerable wings sounded like the roar of an express train. Shortly after daybreak the birds used to leave the covert in large, well-ordered flocks, which split up into smaller parties as they radiated from the centre to their feeding-grounds in the surrounding district. It was supposed that the presence of the Starlings was detrimental to the welfare of the game, although we have seen Pheasants roosting on the lower boughs of trees whose upper branches were crowded with Starlings. Ineffectual attempts were made for some time to scare them away by discharging guns as the birds came in to roost, but they were only driven away in the winter of 1894-95, when the device of flying a kite above the trees was adopted. Compelled to seek a fresh asylum, the evicted Starlings took up their quarters in a fir-covert four miles distant, at Wythen-shawe. Brockholes, speaking of similar gatherings at Caldy and Thurstaston, was of opinion that the majority of the birds migrated before the beginning of winter,¹ but in North and Mid Cheshire the approach of cold weather brings an increase rather than a diminution in their numbers.

The Starling is not fastidious in its choice of a nesting-site, any convenient hole in a building, tree, or cliff suiting its purpose, and we have even seen birds feeding their young in a crevice in a garden rockery. In Dunham Park, Delamere Forest, at Alderley Edge, and elsewhere we have noticed with regret that the Starlings are prone to occupy Woodpeckers' nesting-holes, thereby in all probability influencing the decrease of these already scarce birds. Not only are the old holes utilised, but the Starlings often take possession of

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 8.

those just excavated. Mr. F. Nicholson has often taken eggs from under the thatched eaves of corn-stacks at Ashley Hall, and we have found the bird breeding in similar situations at Wythenshawe.

By destroying worms, small molluscs, and insects, which last are often captured on the wing, the Starling during the greater part of the year renders invaluable service to the agriculturist. The bird, however, is not exclusively an animal feeder, for in the autumn it levies heavy toll upon fruit-trees of various kinds. This frugivorous habit appears to have been acquired only recently, as it is not alluded to in many standard works on Ornithology, and has possibly arisen through the increasing numbers of the birds outgrowing the means of subsistence. Mr. J. D. Siddall alludes to the fondness of Starlings for the berries of the mountain-ash and yew, and states that 'when cherries are ripe, they seem to be converted for the while into eating machines, and go on, if undisturbed, eating all day long.'¹ We have observed that when the mountain-ash and the beam-tree are in fruit, the Starlings far outnumber the Thrushes and Blackbirds which flock to feed upon the ripe berries. Mr. J. J. Cash tells us that he has often seen the birds feeding upon haws, and they are also partial to ripe elder-berries. They show a great partiality for pears, and a flock of twenty or thirty birds will cause considerable damage to a tree of choice fruit. Starlings invariably attack pears in the ripest part, near the stalk, eating downwards, and often leaving only the stalk and core hanging to the branch, whilst the ground below is strewn with the lower half of the fruit.

¹ *Proceedings of the Chester Society of Natural Science and Literature*, No. iv. p. 206.

When feeding in the fields, a flock of Starlings after alighting works outwards in an ever-widening circle; but if alarmed, even when consorting with Lapwings or Rooks, they immediately resume a compact formation on taking wing, and keep separate from the other birds.

The Starling possesses remarkable imitative powers. We have often heard it reproduce the notes of the Skylark, Song Thrush, and Blackbird in its song, and repeat with wonderful accuracy the calls of the Curlew, Ringed Plover, and Lapwing. Near a farmyard, the bird will pick up the crow of a cock, the cackle of a hen, or even such a mechanical noise as the creaking of an unoiled pump.

White birds have been obtained from time to time in various localities, and in December 1893 a peculiar variety was shot at Ashton-on-Mersey. In this bird the general plumage was rich brown, the primaries white, and the tail feathers white splashed with brown; each feather on the breast and belly was broadly margined with pure white, giving the bird a curiously spotted appearance; the head and neck showed traces of the metallic sheen so noticeable in a normally plumaged bird.¹

FAMILY CORVIDÆ.

CHOUGH.

PYRRHOCORAX GRACULUS (Linnaeus).

The Chough has long since deserted its breeding-stations on the north coast of Wales; and though a few pairs still linger in Cardigan Bay and the Isle of Man, it is, owing to its sedentary habits, only a casual wanderer

¹ Oldham, *Naturalist*, 1894, p. 157.

to Cheshire. About the year 1846 one was taken near Holmes Chapel;¹ and Brockholes, writing in 1874, says:—‘Some years ago I met with a flock of these birds in a field at Leasowe.’² On October 4th, 1887, a Chough was knocked down with a whip by a man at Compstall, and was taken to W. H. Gillett, a Stockport taxidermist, who kept it alive for several days. The bird, which showed no signs of having been in confinement, is now in the Vernon Museum, Stockport.

NUTCRACKER.

NUCIFRAGA CARYOCATACTES (Linnæus).

This rare visitor from the continent of Europe has only been obtained once in Cheshire. In 1860 a male was shot at Vale Royal, Delamere, and was preserved by the late William Thompson of Chester. Mr. A. O. Walker purchased the specimen, and presented it to the Grosvenor Museum.³

JAY.

GARRULUS GLANDARIUS (Linnæus).

In spite of relentless persecution by the game-preserver, the Jay is common in the wooded portions of the Plain. Its harsh note is a familiar sound in all the parks and the adjacent coverts, for the bird is more frequently heard than seen. Nowhere is it so plentiful as in Delamere Forest, where we have seen twenty birds hanging in a keeper's ‘museum’; and Dr. Dobie records that in October 1893 over fifty were

¹ T. W. Barlow, *Zoologist*, ser. I. vol. iv. p. 1501.

² Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 8.

³ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 303.

shot as they passed between the Forest and the Ashton Hayes, whither they went in search of acorns.¹

The Jay, as might be expected, is absent from the treeless hills, and is scarce in the valleys of the Goyt and Dane and other well-wooded districts in the east of the county. Mr. N. Neave has never seen it in the neighbourhood of Rainow, and Mr. K. H. Jones informs us that it is rare about Middlewood and Disley, whilst Oldham, during a two years' residence at Romiley, never met with the bird.

As a set-off to the damage done by the Jay in the game-preserves, it should be remembered that the bird destroys many noxious insects. The stomach of a female, shot on the nest, examined by Mr. R. Newstead, contained over one hundred larvæ of *Chimatobia brumata*, two of *Melolontha vulgaris*, and many fragments of incubated Pheasant's eggs.

MAGPIE.

PICA RUSTICA (Scopoli).

Pie, Pyanet.

The Magpie occurs in all parts of the county, its numbers varying in relation to the extent to which game-preserving is carried on in different districts. For instance, it is not very common about Chester,² and in the neighbourhood of Bowdon, Rostherne, and Knutsford, where everything is sacrificed to the interest of the Pheasant, the bird is seldom seen; but in the more open country, away from the larger game-preserves, in such places as Mobberley, Antrobus, and Great Budworth, a few pairs annually succeed in rearing

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 304.

² *Ibid.*

their young. In the Forest of Delamere the Magpie, though not so abundant as the Jay, is a very common resident.

In the whole of the Mersey Valley above Warrington, and throughout the east and north-east of the county, the bird, in spite of persecution, is exceedingly plentiful; the large domed nest, often built in a poplar, being a prominent feature of the landscape when the trees are bare. At Romiley, where, after the breeding season, it is not unusual to see a score of birds in a flock, more than one hundred were killed on one small shooting in 1896. Mr. N. Neave tells us that in 1891 he took seventy eggs, and found many nests containing young, in the neighbourhood of Rainow. Here, as elsewhere in the Hill Country, the Magpie is regarded with great disfavour by the poultry-keeper and game-preserver alike.

In the early morning, before people are astir, the Magpie throws off the habitual caution begotten of persecution, and may then be approached without much difficulty. At a quarter to four on a July morning Oldham saw a couple feeding in the street amongst the houses, within a few yards of Romiley railway station.

When cock-fighting was a popular sport, an idea prevailed that Game-fowls' eggs hatched by a Magpie produced birds with enhanced fighting qualities. Mr. P. Cunliffe tells us that he recollects as a boy, some fifty or sixty years ago, climbing to a Magpie's nest at Handforth, to bring down for a farmer some chickens, whose birth was proclaimed by their chirping.¹

¹ *Naturalist*, February 1899, p. 51.

For account of Game-fowls hatched in Sparrow Hawk's nest in Northumberland, and in nests of Magpies in France, and of Magpies and Hooded Crows in Scandinavia, see *Naturalist*, March 1899, p. 76.



DUNHAM PARK.

JACKDAW.

CORVUS MONEDULA, Linnæus.

The Jackdaw is found throughout Cheshire, and is particularly numerous in many of the parks, where it nests in hollow trees and in the dense growth on the trunks of old limes. The bird holds its own in spite of persecution by gamekeepers, who shoot it whenever they get a chance, and also destroy large numbers of eggs and nestlings. In Dunham Park many pairs build in holes high up in the ancient beeches and oaks, and succeed in bringing off their young, for the nests are practically inaccessible and the old birds are far too wary to allow themselves to be shot. Among the hills in the east of the county, where there is a scarcity of old timber, the Jackdaw usually nests in chimneys, steeples, quarries, and rock-faces, situations little affected by it in the Plain.

The Jackdaw is often sociable in the breeding season, many pairs breeding in close proximity; but its gregarious habits are most noticeable in autumn and winter, when large flocks—almost invariably associated with Rooks—may be seen feeding in the fields.

Mr. C. E. Stott has described the actions of a Jackdaw which rose from the bank of the river Weaver with a full-grown water-vole in its claws, which it dropped from a height of about forty feet. This was repeated seven or eight times, until the animal's life was extinct, when the bird carried it away to a neighbouring steeple.¹ Mr. Stott infers that the Jackdaw dropped the vole deliberately again and again in order to kill it; but possibly it was dropped involuntarily as the bird was unable to carry so great a weight.

¹ *Zoologist*, ser. III. vol. xiv. p. 437. 1890.

RAVEN.

CORVUS CORAX, Linnæus.

The Raven has long been extinct in Cheshire, although there can be little doubt that it was once resident on the wild moorlands of Longdendale and other parts of the Eastern Hills. So plentiful, indeed, were Ravens at the beginning of the eighteenth century, that only one penny per head was paid for their destruction by the church-wardens of Stockport.¹

Ravens formerly frequented the marshes of the Dee Estuary, and they were abundant there until about the year 1866, when, Brockholes believed, poison was employed by the farmers in order to exterminate them on account of their depredations amongst the sheep. He records that a pair nested on the west side of Hilbre Island in the spring of 1857.² There is a bird in Captain Congreve's collection which was obtained at Burton in 1840.³

CARRION CROW.

CORVUS CORONE, Linnæus.

Game-preservation has well-nigh banished the Carrion Crow from Cheshire, but even in the face of relentless persecution a few pairs still succeed in rearing their young in different localities in the Plain. Mr. K. H. Jones tells us he found a nest at Delamere in May 1896; and in the same month in 1883 we found a freshly-killed bird nailed to a tree near Carrington Moss. Writing in 1882, Mr. Thomas Worthington

¹ Heginbotham, *Stockport, Ancient and Modern*, p. 269.

² Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 8; and *Proceedings of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society*, vol. xv., 1860-61, p. 18.

³ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 304.

stated that a few Carrion Crows nested every year in the Mersey Valley near Northenden;¹ and Mr. M. Wood informs us that he has found nests at Cheadle, Lymm, and Delamere in recent years. On June 6th, 1891, we found a nest in a tall tree in a pheasant-covert in Higher Peover Park, which contained five young birds, one of which was conspicuously smaller and weaker than the others. A partly eaten Ring Dove and the wing of a young Jay lay at the foot of the tree, and in an old nest in an adjoining tree were the remains of another Ring Dove. In autumn and winter numbers of Carrion Crows congregate in the Duckwood at Eaton, where they roost, and remain in spite of persecution.²

Brockholes says that prior to the year 1865 the Carrion Crow was a common resident in the neighbourhood of the Dee Marshes, nesting regularly at Shotwick, Burton, Saughall, and Puddington. He considered that about that date this species shared the fate of the Raven,³ but Dr. Dobie states that it has nested within recent years at Mollington and elsewhere in Wirral, and that it is seen occasionally in winter on the marshes between Stanlow and Frodsham.²

A few pairs still nest in the valleys of the Goyt and Dane, and visit the adjacent grouse-moors in search of eggs, where they are trapped and shot by gamekeepers on every possible occasion.

HOODED CROW.

CORVUS CORNIX, Linnæus.

The Hooded Crow, a resident in the Isle of Man, and an abundant visitor to the eastern counties of England,

¹ *Manchester City News*, December 16, 1882.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 305.

³ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 9.

is only known in Cheshire as a straggler during the colder months. The bird is not included in Brockholes' list, but it appears to have been a frequent visitor to the Wirral coast in the first half of the present century, for Mrs. Longueville of Upton Cross, Chester, who then lived at Hoylake, informed Dr. Dobie that she remembered often seeing 'Royston Crows' in winter, their arrival being watched for by those interested in birds. At Hilbre Point they used to feed on mussels and crabs, which they broke by dropping them from a great height upon the rocks below. In recent years, however, the bird has only been noticed occasionally in Wirral. Two were shot out of a flock of seven or eight near Ledsham in November 1888, one of which is now in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester. Another bird in the same collection was obtained on the shore of the Mersey at Ince in 1882. Dr. Dobie also records the bird from Aldersey and Eaton Park.¹

The Hooded Crow occurs but rarely on the Cheshire Plain. One was shot some years ago at Warburton,² and another, in the collection of Mr. J. E. Newton of Denfield Hall, was obtained near Rostherne some time prior to 1860. About the year 1884 a couple were seen in the woods at Plumbley; one, which was shot, is now in the possession of Mr. J. W. Nuttall of Bowdon. Mr. John Baddeley saw a Hooded Crow at close quarters when he was shooting near Cheadle in December 1895.³ On February 17th, 1897, a bird was killed near Northwich; Hilton of Sale, in whose shop we saw it, assured us that he had preserved others which had been obtained on Carrington Moss.

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 306.

² J. E. Smith, *Manchester City News*, May 16, 1874.

³ *Manchester City News*, April 18, 1896.

ROOK.

CORVUS FRUGILEGUS, Linnæus.

As might be expected, in a pastoral county like Cheshire, the Rook is an abundant resident, and its nesting-colonies are met with everywhere. Flocks may be seen feeding in such diverse situations as the pastures and arable land of the Plain, the shores and sandbanks of the estuaries, and the grouse-moors of the East. In the cultivated districts the damage done to the crops is perhaps more than compensated for by the number of injurious insects and slugs which the birds destroy; but on the moors their egg-eating propensities cause them to be looked upon with disfavour.

During autumn and winter Rooks and Lapwings feed together in amity, but in the breeding season Rooks quarter the fields in search of eggs, and a pair of clamorous Lapwings may frequently be seen chasing a marauder from the vicinity of their nest.

The birds often exhibit a preference for a particular tree in a rookery. At Wythenshawe, Mr. J. J. Cash has counted forty nests in a single sycamore which comes into leaf earlier than the surrounding elms and beeches.

FAMILY ALAUDIDÆ.

SKYLARK.

ALAUDA ARVENSIS, Linnæus.

This familiar songster abounds throughout Cheshire, nesting at all altitudes, from the sandhills of the coast to the tops of the highest moors nearly two thousand

feet above sea-level. Although the Skylark is absent from the bleak moorlands in winter, it may be met with in other parts of the county throughout the year. Brockholes was of the opinion that it is a partial migrant, as he used to see flocks in the autumn crossing the Dee Marshes in a southerly direction.¹

We have heard the well-known song of the Skylark more than an hour before sunrise in May, and it is not infrequently continued until after dark. The song is not invariably uttered as the bird is soaring; we have often heard Larks singing on the ground, or whilst perching on a rail, hedge, or some tall weed in a field of young corn.

The Skylark does not readily forsake its nest. In July 1887, Oldham flushed a bird from a nest in a field at Ringway, from which the hay had just been carried. The three eggs, which were in an advanced state of incubation, must have been laid before the grass was cut, and had only escaped destruction from the knife of the mowing-machine because the nest was placed in a furrow.

CRESTED LARK.

ALAUDA CRISTATA, Linnæus.

[A Crested Lark is stated to have been obtained near Macclesfield Grammar School in 1873. Dr. J. D. Sainter, who recorded the occurrence,² adduced no evidence whatever to substantiate his identification; and as the bird cannot now be traced, we think it inadvisable to include this species in a Cheshire avifauna.]

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 7.

² *Nature*, vol. ix. p. 132. 1873.

WOODLARK.

ALAUDA ARBOREA, Linnæus.

The Woodlark is a scarce resident in Cheshire, and only a few instances of its occurrence are known, although possibly it has been overlooked.

Captain Congreve has in his possession a water-colour drawing of a Woodlark, marked 'Burton, 1839.'¹ Brockholes saw one at Cloughton, near Birkenhead, in April 1859, and a pair at Burton in May 1861.² Writing in 1873, Dr. J. D. Sainter stated that Woodlarks had recently been observed at Gawsworth, where they used to breed twenty-five years previously.³ Mr. H. H. Corbett tells us that he has known of a nest at Alderley. In 1882, the late J. F. Robinson stated that he heard a Woodlark singing on several evenings in a wooded hollow at the foot of Simmons Hill, Manley.⁴ Mr. W. Beaumont, who has kept Woodlarks as cage-birds and is well acquainted with their song, tells us that he has heard birds singing at Woodley and Poynton.

¹ Dobie, *in lit.*

² Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 7.

³ *Nature*, vol. ix. p. 132. 1873.

⁴ *Manchester City News*, July 8, 1882.

ORDER PICARIÆ.

FAMILY CYPSELIDÆ.

SWIFT.

CYPSELUS APUS (Linnæus).

Squealer, Longwing, Devil Screamer.

Dr. Dobie says that this well-known summer visitor arrives in the Chester district during the first week in May.¹ In the north of the county it is a few days later, the 9th being the average date of its arrival at Bowdon for the last fifteen years, whilst in the Hill Country of the East the bird seldom makes its appearance before the middle of the month. As a rule all the birds have gone south again by the end of August; but in 1896 a few were observed in Cheshire, as in other parts of England, throughout September and as late as the first week of October; and on November 3rd, 1885, Coward found a young bird at Bowdon which had only been dead a few days.

In the neighbourhood of Bowdon and Sale the Swift has greatly increased in numbers within recent years, and a similar increase is reported from other localities where it was formerly by no means common. In spite of this fact the bird is not universally distributed, and is still rare or absent in many places without any apparent reason. For example, during the summers of 1895 and 1896, Oldham only observed a single pair in Romiley, although the bird was not uncommon two

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 307.

miles away at Woodley. A few pairs breed in most parts of the Hill Country, and birds may be often seen in late summer hawking for insects on the highest moors.

Considering the enormous wing-power of the Swift, it does not go far from the nest during the breeding season, but collects most of its food in a very restricted area, a number of birds generally breeding in close proximity, and feeding in company.

ALPINE SWIFT.

CYPSELUS MELBA (Linnæus).

[Byerley, in his *Fauna of Liverpool*, mentions, on the authority of Mather, a Liverpool taxidermist, that an Alpine Swift 'was killed at the mouth of the Dee, many years ago, by Mr. Mostyn.'¹ He does not appear to have examined the bird himself; and as there is no evidence that it was submitted to a competent authority, it is, in our opinion, wisest to consider this occurrence as 'not proven.']

FAMILY CAPRIMULGIDÆ.

NIGHTJAR.

CAPRIMULGUS EUROPÆUS, Linnæus.

*Goatsucker, Fern Owl, Evening Jar, Jenny Spinner,
Night Hawk.*

The Nightjar usually arrives in Cheshire about the third week in May, and its churring notes may be heard in open woodlands and on the heaths throughout

¹ Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 16.

the summer months. In 1893, Coward heard one in Dunham Park on the 24th of April, an exceptionally early date.

In Wirral the bird breeds regularly in the fir-woods of Bidston, Storeton, Ness, and Burton, and on low heather-clad hills, such as those at Bidston, Caldy, and Thurstaston.¹

On the Plain the Nightjar is very common in Delamere Forest, frequenting the thickets as well as the open glades. When walking from Hatchmere to Mouldsworth on a June evening, we have heard the churring of as many as six separate birds. Beyond the confines of the Forest the bird nests on Helsby Hill and Little Budworth Common.² Before the reclamation of the Moss it was abundant at Carrington; and many pairs still nest in the plantations and the narrow belts of heath planted with birches which border the roadways. Nightjars also frequent patches of rough ground and open fir-woods in many other parts of the Plain. We have heard them at Lindow Common, Alderley Edge, Soss Moss Wood near Chelford, Marton, Mere Moss, the Moss Covert at Plumbley, Butts Clough near Ashley, Rudheath, Knutsford, Somerford, and in the parks at Tabley and Dunham Massey.

The bird is generally distributed and fairly abundant in Longdendale and on the moorlands near Staleybridge, as well as throughout the hilly country lying between the Goyt and Dane.

In the summer of 1899, Oldham had several opportunities of observing the behaviour of a couple of young Nightjars on Alderley Edge. The nestlings were discovered by Mr. F. S. Graves on June 25th, when they

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 10; Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 307.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 307.

were apparently only two or three days old, and were a few inches from the broken egg-shells. On July 2nd they were eight or ten feet from the egg-shells, and altered their position each time they were inspected. The feathers were just beginning to show through the brown down. On being disturbed, the female rose and fluttered along close above the bracken, with outspread tail and drooping wings, dropping on an oak bough, and uttering a *chuck* of alarm. The young were silent, even when handled, though when first found by Mr. Graves they repeatedly uttered a low note. When crouching beneath the brooding female, the young always had their heads facing in an opposite direction to their parent. On July 2nd, the rictal bristles of the young still retained plumose tips, but five days later these tips had been shed and the bristles were longer. Though well feathered on July 7th, and able to scramble about on the ground with surprising agility, the young birds exhibited no signs of pectination on the claws.

FAMILY PICIDÆ.—SUB-FAMILY IYNGINÆ.

WRYNECK.

IYNX TORQUILLA, Linnæus.

The Wryneck is a scarce summer visitor to the north-west of England, and has been but seldom observed in Cheshire. Byerley states, on the authority of Mr. Webster, that the bird has bred at Saughall Massey.¹ Mr. J. E. Smith, writing in 1874, says that 'no specimens of the Wryneck have been seen in Cheshire since 1818 [?1868], when one nested in

¹ Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 16.

Ashley Lane, Bowdon.¹ A bird and seven eggs were taken by Mr. A. Cookson from a nest in the trunk of an old poplar at Oakmere about the year 1884.² We are informed by Mr. W. Beaumont that in 1880 a Wryneck with a broken wing, which had been found beneath the telegraph wires at Marple, was brought to him in the flesh; and Mr. F. S. Graves tells us that he saw one at Bramhall about the year 1890.

SUB-FAMILY PICINÆ.

GREEN WOODPECKER.

GECCINUS VIRIDIS (Linnæus).

Yaffle, Witwall, Etwall.

The Green Woodpecker is irregularly distributed throughout the Cheshire lowlands, being only present in those districts where there is plenty of old timber, and, except in one or two localities, is nowhere abundant.

We know of no instance in which the bird has nested in Wirral, though Brockholes believed that it occasionally did so, as he had observed birds at all times of the year.³ Byerley only records the bird from New Brighton.⁴

It is rare in the neighbourhood of Chester, is occasionally seen at Ince, and has nested at Stanlow, Bolesworth Castle, and Eaton.⁵ At Edge and Combermere it is abundant,⁶ and Mr. A. P. White tells us that there are a few in the woods at Little Budworth. We have often seen the bird in Delamere Forest, and it is com-

¹ *Manchester City News*, May 30, 1874.

² *Cf. Dobie, op. cit.* p. 307.

³ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 9.

⁴ Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 15.

⁵ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 308.

⁶ *Ibid.*

moner there than anywhere else in the county. In the north of Cheshire the Green Woodpecker is but rarely met with; some years ago one was shot at Northenden, and a few pairs nest at Tatton, Rostherne, Dunham, and Alderley. It was formerly common at Holmes Chapel,¹ and still occurs sparingly in that neighbourhood, as well as at Rudheath and Marton.

Examples have been obtained in Lyme Park, and Mr. S. Radcliffe says that the bird nests in Matley Woods; but it is, naturally, absent from the treeless parts of the Hill Country.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER.

DENDROCOPUS MAJOR (Linnæus).

The Great Spotted Woodpecker, a rather scarce resident in Cheshire, occurs sparingly during autumn and winter in all parts of the county, but in the breeding season it is necessarily confined to woods in which it can find suitable nesting-places.

The bird has seldom been known to breed in Wirral. Brockholes states that a pair nested, in May 1860, in Patrick Wood near Bromborough Mills,² and in July 1865 four young birds were obtained at Hooton.³ Dr. Dobie mentions that a pair were shot in a garden at New Brighton in 1887.⁴

In Eaton Park and Delamere Forest this species may be met with all the year round, and there is presumptive evidence that it has bred recently at Edge, for in the spring of 1893 the Rev. C. Wolley-Dod, although

¹ T. W. Barlow, ms.

² Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 9.

³ W. L. Hayman, *Field*, vol. xxvii. p. 77. 1866.

⁴ Dobie, *op. cit.* pp. 308, 309.

he did not actually find a nest, used to hear the birds daily, and his keeper told him that in April he saw three fighting for a hole in a hollow beech.¹ Mr. K. H. Jones has found the nest at Plumbley and Peover. The bird breeds in the fir-woods on Alderley Edge, and in the parks at Alderley and Dunham Massey. Probably it occurs in many of the parks in the Plain, but has been overlooked owing to its retiring habits.

Mr. J. K. Taylor informs us that some years ago he saw a pair of birds at their nesting-hole in an ash-tree near Goyts Bridge; and we have seen many holes at Taxal Wood in the same valley.

In Dunham Park the Great Spotted Woodpecker generally excavates its nesting-hole in a beech; at Alderley Edge and Taxal firs and birches are the favourite trees; and Mr. K. H. Jones has noticed a predilection for birches at Plumbley and Peover. Old nesting-holes are frequently occupied by Starlings.

Mr. R. Newstead has pointed out that this Woodpecker sometimes eats nauseous insects. In the stomach of a female obtained at Broxton in January 1891, he found at least four examples of a ladybird (*Hippodamia variegata*, Goez.), as well as a number of larvæ and imagines of the palatable *Rhagium bifasciatum*, several of which were almost digested, whereas the ladybirds were fresh and had evidently been captured last. From this it may be inferred that the distasteful ladybirds had been eaten readily and not owing to stress of hunger.²

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* pp. 308, 309.

² *Entomologist*, vol. xxiv. p. 100. 1891.

LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER.

DENDROCOPUS MINOR (Linnæus).

Owing to its smaller size and its habit of frequenting the tree-tops, the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker has probably been even more often overlooked than the preceding species. It has, however, been observed in many widely separated localities in Wirral and the Plain.

The bird is not included in Brockholes' list, although Byerley mentions a wood near Bromborough Pool as a locality for it;¹ and Mr. W. Cox of Liverpool informed Dr. Dobie that he had received for preservation several examples which had been obtained in Eastham Woods.²

The Lesser Spotted Woodpecker breeds at Eaton, where Dr. Dobie was shown a nest in which a brood had recently been reared by the hen bird after the cock had been killed. In June 1886 an example was obtained at Tiverton. In the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, there are specimens from Saighton and Ince, both killed in winter. At the latter place several have been seen or heard since 1884, and during the autumn of 1893 one frequented some tall elms for several weeks.² At Edge the bird is plentiful, and the Rev. C. Wolley-Dod states that it begins to rattle at the end of January or beginning of February, the noise being fainter than that made by its larger congener, and only audible to a distance of about two hundred yards.³ Mr. K. H. Jones, who has once seen the bird in Delamere Forest, informs us that it breeds every year at Plumbley, where he has taken eggs in June.

¹ Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 15.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 309.

³ *Field*, vol. lxxxvii. p. 737. 1896.

There is a specimen from Rostherne in a case of stuffed birds at Denfield Hall, and we have at different times seen examples from Dunham Park in the hands of local bird-stuffers. A few pairs nest every year at Somerford, and Mr. W. H. Peterkin has eggs in his collection which he took from a hole in a birch on Alderley Edge some years ago.

Like the last species, the bird breeds in the wooded valley of the Goyt, where Oldham has seen its nesting-holes in a dead fir at Whaley Bridge. Mr. R. Nunnerley has two examples in his collection which he shot on different occasions at Sutton near Macclesfield.

FAMILY ALCEDINIDÆ.

KINGFISHER.

ALCEDO ISPIDA, Linnæus.

In spite of the fatal brilliancy of plumage, which makes it the coveted prize of every 'moucher' who owns a gun, and the fact that many are sacrificed in the interest of trout, the Kingfisher still holds its own on most of the Cheshire streams and meres. It nests sparingly throughout Wirral and the Plain and on the streams of the Eastern Hills. Mr. N. Neave has found the nest in a sandpit near Rainow, a quarter of a mile from the nearest water. In autumn and winter Kingfishers often frequent the small marlpits in the fields, and ditches in such places as the water-meadows of the Mersey Valley. At this season of the year we have seen it on the tidal gutters of the Dee Marshes; and Mr. L. Jones has a specimen he shot on Hilbre Island.

The note of the Kingfisher is heard to the best advantage when the birds are pairing. In Dunham Park, in

April, Coward has watched the male chasing the female round the island on the Old Man Pool, and in and out amongst the tops of the adjacent beeches, uttering the while a loud clear whistle not unlike that of the Common Sandpiper. During these evolutions the male bird several times perched for some seconds in the upper branches of the trees.

FAMILY CORACIDÆ.

ROLLER.

CORACIAS GARRULUS, Linnæus.

[The bare statement of the late Dr. J. D. Sainter that a Roller was killed two or three miles south of Macclesfield¹ hardly justifies the inclusion of the species in a list of Cheshire birds, and in the absence of details we can only consider the record very doubtful.]

FAMILY UPUPIDÆ.

HOPOE.

UPUPA EOPS, Linnæus.

The Hoopoe, as far as we know, has only been observed on two occasions in Cheshire. The *Chester Courant* for September 11th, 1792, contained the following paragraph:—‘A very curious bird was shot on Sunday morning in the garden of Mrs. Bolds, of the Bars, in this city. It is accurately described by Pennant in his *Zoology* as the Hoopoe; has a beautiful crest, which it raises or falls at pleasure when alive. It is found in

¹ *Nature*, vol. ix. p. 132. 1873.

some parts of Europe, in Egypt, and even as remote as Ceylon in the East Indies.—ADAM.¹

Byerley records one at Hoylake on the authority of the Rev. T. Staniforth.²

FAMILY CUCULIDÆ.

CUCKOO.

CUCULUS CANORUS, Linnæus.

The reports of the arrival of the Cuckoo in March or early April that appear almost every year in the local press are unworthy of credence; for although in some seasons the bird makes its appearance as early as the 12th of April, it is not, as a rule, until from the 20th to the end of the month that its familiar notes are heard in Cheshire.

Throughout the summer the Cuckoo is everywhere common, frequenting the coast sandhills, the meadows and woodlands of the Plain, and the uplands of the East. On the breezy grouse-moors of Longdendale and the hills between Macclesfield and the Derbyshire border, the bird is particularly abundant, depositing its eggs in the nests of the Meadow Pipits that build in the heather. When crossing these moors in May or June, one's attention is constantly attracted by the sight of a Cuckoo pursued by a pair of its victims, which will follow it with shrill notes of alarm for a considerable distance. Later, in July and August, one often sees a young Cuckoo attended by its foster-parents, whose actions may be readily observed owing to the lack of cover. The Cuckoo, seated on a stone wall or tussock of grass, utters an incessant querulous

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 310.

² Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 16.

cry, a long-drawn *chiz-chiz-chiz*, which is continued on the approach of danger in spite of the alarm-notes of the Pipits. When the Pipits have gained confidence they recommence to feed the Cuckoo, which awaits their advent with depressed body, quivering wings, and excited cries. After receiving the food the young bird invariably makes a vicious snap at the Pipit, which warily retreats a few inches and rests a moment, before flying off again for further supplies. Although the Cuckoo fears a human being and takes flight upon his near approach, its fear appears to be instinctive, and has obviously no relation to the alarm-notes of the Pipits, which would certainly influence the behaviour of their own young.

In Cheshire the Cuckoo usually foists its eggs upon the Tree or Meadow Pipit. Less commonly the Robin, Hedge Sparrow, Pied Wagtail, Yellow Wagtail, Yellow Ammer, Sedge Warbler, or Whitethroat is imposed upon; and in 1861 a young Cuckoo is said to have been reared by a pair of House Sparrows at Northwich.¹ A Cuckoo often victimises the same pair of birds year after year. In June 1886, Mr. F. Brownsword found a Robin's nest containing four eggs of that bird and one of a Cuckoo in a lane at Prestbury. In the following year there was a young Cuckoo in a Robin's nest in the same lane, not ten yards away; and on visiting the place again in 1889, Mr. Brownsword found four Robin's and a Cuckoo's egg in a nest about a hundred yards higher up the lane.²

The Rev. C. Wolley-Dod has described an interesting case of Swallows rearing a Cuckoo and one of their own young in the same nest at Edge Hall in 1892.³

¹ J. Tomlinson, *Field*, vol. xviii. p. 67. 1861.

² *Naturalist*, p. 176. 1894. ³ *Ibis*, ser. vi. vol. iv. p. 524. 1892.

On June 22nd his attention was called to a Swallow's nest on a beam in his potting-shed, containing a Cuckoo apparently a week old and two Swallows three or four days younger. About a week before, his gardener had noticed two broken Swallow's eggs on the ground beneath the nest. The Cuckoo did not appear to pay any attention to the young Swallows, one of which had disappeared on the 23rd, having probably died and been removed by the old birds. The remaining young one seemed weakly and starved, so Mr. Wolley-Dod placed an empty Blackbird's nest on the beam and put the Cuckoo in it; but as the old birds confined their attention to the usurper, he moved the young Swallow also. On the 2nd of July the Cuckoo left the nest and sat on the beam behind it, and on the following day the Swallows began to neglect the foster-child for their own offspring. Three days later the Cuckoo upset a prop that supported the Blackbird's nest, causing the old birds to be violently agitated. They never fed it again, and from this time seemed to regard it as an enemy, flying at it with angry cries, and approaching their own young by a circuitous route. On the 6th the Cuckoo escaped into the garden, where the old birds, in company with several others, chased it from tree to tree, mobbing it as though it had been an adult Cuckoo. After this date Mr. Wolley-Dod did not see the Cuckoo again, and it is uncertain whether it starved or was able to fend for itself. The young Swallow left the nest on the 8th or 9th of July.

ORDER STRIGES.

FAMILY STRIGIDÆ.

BARN OWL.

STRIX FLAMMEA, Linnæus.

White Owl.

Except in the Hill Country, where it is rare, the Barn Owl is a not uncommon resident throughout the county. Although generally nesting, and hiding during the day, in church towers, house roofs, barns, and dovecotes, many pairs are domiciled in hollow trees in the parks. The bird is often found in populous districts, several pairs nesting in house roofs in Bowdon, Sale, and other suburbs on the south side of Manchester. Dr. Dobie states that a pair used to nest annually in the old tower of Chester Cathedral, while others still rear their young in Chester and the immediate vicinity. A similar attachment to houses in populous suburbs has been noted at Bebbington and Birkenhead Park.¹

The food of this Owl varies in accordance with the character of the district in which the bird lives, and an examination of its pellets shows that one animal is often preyed upon more than any other; for example, pellets from Great Budworth are mainly composed of the remains of the House Sparrow; in Dunham Park the staple food is the field-vole, but pellets from an outlying covert yield long-tailed field-mice and common shrews in excess of any other creature. In the Cam-

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 311.

bridgeshire Fens, in a district overrun by moles, some pellets examined by Oldham were almost exclusively composed of the bones and fur of those animals.

The following analyses show the varied nature of the Barn Owl's food. We have never found any traces of young game-birds in the pellets, although we have occasionally come across skulls of Thrushes and Starlings. In addition to the remains of vertebrates, every batch of pellets contains the elytra of a few large beetles (*Geotrupes*, *Melolontha*, etc.).

No. of Pellets.	Locality.	Lesser Shrew.	Water Shrew.	Common Shrew.	Rat.	Mouse.	Long-tailed Field-mouse.	Water-vole.	Field-vole.	Bank-vole.	Sparrows and Finches.	Insectivorous Birds.
11.	Handforth, . .	...	4	8	1	...	5	...	6	3	4	...
14.	Great Budworth,	...	...	1	...	1	...	...	1	1	21	1
7.	Dunham Park, .	...	...	6	1	...	2	...	19	...	...	...
10.	„ „	...	...	5	...	...	6	...	17	...	2	...
30.	„ „	1	3	35	...	6	12	...	41	...	6	1
24.	Red Moor Covert, } Dunham Park, }	...	...	11	1	8	14	1	1	3	2	...

A Barn Owl that Coward kept in captivity for some years would eat dead frogs readily, but invariably refused to swallow the toads which were offered it.

LONG-EARED OWL.

ASIO OTUS (Linnæus).

Horned Owl.

The Long-eared Owl, though not abundant in Cheshire, occurs in all parts of the county, frequenting fir-woods or even isolated clumps of Scotch firs.

In Wirral, Brockholes described the Long-eared Owl as resident in the fir-woods of Bidston, Prenton Mount, Storeton, Ness, Burton, and Ledsham,¹ and there are young birds in down in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, from Saughall. It breeds in Stanney Wood near Thornton-le-Moors, and on the Eaton Estate,² as well as at Delamere, where it is fairly common. Butts Clough in the Bollin Valley, the Moss Covert at Plumbley, Rudheath, Gawsworth, Alderley Edge, Dunham Park, and the fir-woods bordering Carrington Moss may also be cited as localities in the Plain where it nests. In the Goyt Valley and the wooded parts of the Hill Country it is the commonest Owl, and is often taken in the keepers' pole-traps.

After a storm in May 1887, we found two young Long-eared Owls that had been blown out of a nest in a fir at Plumbley. On climbing to the nest we found upon it a Yellow Ammer and a nestling of some small bird, as well as the tail of a Pied Wagtail. In order to prepare them for the consumption of the young Owls, the birds had been decapitated and partially denuded of feathers, and their bones had been crushed.

SHORT-EARED OWL.

ASIO ACCIPITRINUS (Pallas).

This well-known autumn visitor is found in open situations in Cheshire, from the coast sandhills to the moors of the East, and is often flushed by shooting-parties from its resting-place amongst the turnips or in the heather. Mr. L. Jones has a specimen which he shot on Hilbre Island.

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 4.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 311.

It is doubtful whether the Short-eared Owl breeds in Cheshire at the present time, although it has been seen in summer on the Eaton Estate by Mr. H. Garland,¹ and it used to nest regularly on Carrington Moss until the year 1893. By that time all the moss-land had been reclaimed, but a pair of birds succeeded in rearing a brood. The young birds were seen on the wing during the summer, but unfortunately they were slain on the 1st of September by the partridge-shooters. The bird is well known to the gamekeepers on the moors of East Cheshire as a winter visitor; but our inquiries, both in Longdendale and on the hills near Macclesfield, have failed to elicit any information about its nesting there, although Mr. F. B. Whitlock states that it breeds on the contiguous Derbyshire moorlands.²

TAWNY OWL.

SYRNIUM ALUCO (Linnæus).

Brown Owl, Wood Owl.

In the parks and woods of the Cheshire Plain the Tawny Owl, although much persecuted by game-preservers, is a fairly common resident. In such places as the parks at Eaton, Tatton, Tabley, Alderley, and Dunham Massey, where the hollow trees provide it with nesting-holes in abundance, its melodious hoot may be heard almost any still evening. In Wirral this Owl appears to be rare, for although Byerley mentions that it breeds in Stanley Wood, Eastham,³ it is not included in Brockholes' list. Mr. K. H.

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 311.

² Whitlock, *Birds of Derbyshire*, p. 121. 1893.

³ Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 11.

Jones has taken eggs at Disley, and we have seen the bird in the woods of the Dane Valley near Wincle; but in the Hill Country generally this species is far less common than the Long-eared Owl.

Unless disturbed, the Tawny Owl seldom leaves its hiding-place in daylight, and when it does venture abroad it becomes the butt of all the small birds in the neighbourhood. In Dunham Park, on a bright May morning, Coward's attention was attracted by an uproar in the tops of the beeches. On proceeding to the spot he saw a number of Starlings, Thrushes, and Blackbirds, which, together with a few Robins and other small birds, were mobbing a pair of Tawny Owls, flying round them or hopping amongst the branches in their immediate neighbourhood with loud and angry cries. The alarm-notes of a Jackdaw, which joined the concourse, speedily attracted about a dozen of its fellows to the spot, whose cries increased the din as they circled round the tree-tops. The aggressors were careful to keep out of reach of the Owls' talons, but succeeded in dislodging the dazed creatures from their perches, and followed them from tree to tree with incessant clamour.

LITTLE OWL.

ATHENE NOCTUA (Scopoli).

As most authorities are agreed that the majority, at any rate, of the Little Owls that have been obtained in England have either escaped from confinement or been purposely liberated, the bird can only be provisionally included in a Cheshire avifauna.¹

¹ Cf. Seebohm, *op. cit.* vol. i. p. 174. Saunders, *op. cit.* p. 301.

In the Warrington Museum there is a specimen which was shot by a gamekeeper named Robinson at Arley, in December 1887. Mr. R. J. Smith informed Dr. Dobie that a small species of Owl, which he believed to be the Little Owl, bred in an oak in Eaton Park some time late in the eighties.¹

SCOPS OWL.

SCOPS GIU (Scopoli).

This rare wanderer has reached Cheshire on one occasion. An example in the possession of Mr. J. H. Leche was shot by his gamekeeper in June 1868, at Carden Park.² The bird was heard on several evenings before it was obtained, uttering its peculiar cry of *kew, kew*.³

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 312.

² Gould, *Birds of Great Britain*, vol. i. 1873.

Cf. Yarrell, *History of British Birds*, 4th edit. vol. i. p. 174.

Harting, *Handbook of British Birds*, p. 94.

³ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 312.

ORDER ACCIPITRES.

FAMILY FALCONIDÆ.

MARSH HARRIER.

CIRCUS ÆRUGINOSUS (Linnæus).

There can be little doubt that in the early part of the century the Marsh Harrier used to nest regularly on the mosses which then covered thousands of acres in the broad valley of the Mersey. Like most of the larger birds of prey, it has vanished from our county, owing to the increase of cultivation and game-preservation, and for the last thirty years, at any rate, it has only been known in Cheshire as a casual visitor.

About the year 1887 or 1888, a Marsh Harrier in immature plumage was shot by a gamekeeper on Carrington Moss, and was stuffed by Samuel Penney, a bricklayer at Ashton-on-Mersey, in whose cottage we saw the bird. Dr. Dobie mentions a second example, an immature male, which was killed on the Eaton Estate several years ago, and is now in the possession of Mr. H. Garland.¹

HEN HARRIER.

CIRCUS CYANEUS (Linnæus).

Although no evidence of the fact exists, it is probable that the Hen Harrier at one time bred regularly on the heather-clad hills of East Cheshire; but, like the pre-

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 312.

ceding species, it is now only known as a rare wanderer to the county.

Early in November 1886, one was shot on the moors at Wildboarclough near Macclesfield. Mr. Howard Saunders, to whom the bird was submitted, pronounced it to be a young female.¹ In the first week of the same month in 1897, a female was shot at Saughall near Chester, after it had frequented the neighbourhood for several days. Brockholes stated that he had occasionally seen a Harrier on Bidston Marsh, which he believed to be of this species.²

MONTAGU'S HARRIER.

CIRCUS CINERACEUS (Montagu).

[Byerley's bald statement, made on the authority of Mather, a Liverpool taxidermist, that a Montagu's Harrier was obtained on Bidston Marsh,³ is hardly evidence enough to justify the inclusion of the bird in the county list.]

COMMON BUZZARD.

BUTEO VULGARIS, Leach.

A few pairs of Common Buzzards still breed in the more secluded districts of the mountains of North Wales, and occasionally birds are met with on the Cheshire side of the border and in Wirral. Brockholes, writing in 1874, states that seven or eight years previously one was shot at Puddington, and that two others frequented the Dee Marshes the same autumn.²

¹ A. N. Curzon, *Field*, vol. lxxviii. p. 884. 1886.

² Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 4.

³ Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 10.

A pair of Buzzards, probably the birds alluded to by Brockholes, were observed in the neighbourhood of Neston in September 1865. The late C. S. Gregson shot one about this time on Moel Famau, North Wales, which he believed to be one of this pair;¹ but as the species is not uncommon in the counties of Denbigh and Flint, even at the present time, his conclusion hardly appears to be warranted.

Three examples are in existence, which were obtained on the Eaton Estate: two in the possession of Mr. H. Garland,² and one, killed in 1891, in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester. Another specimen in the same collection was shot at Thornton-le-Moors on October 27th, 1890.

We only know of one occurrence of the Buzzard on the Cheshire Plain within recent years. In the Vernon Museum, Stockport, there is a bird labelled—‘Shot on Lindow Common by J. Thorniley.’

Mr. B. R. S. Pemberton tells us that a Buzzard was shot in Taxal Wood near Whaley Bridge in 1895.

ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD.

BUTEO LAGOPUS (J. F. Gmelin).

The Rough-legged Buzzard, which has been obtained several times in Cheshire on the autumn migration, is met with more frequently than the Common Buzzard. One was captured in a farmyard near Appleton on November 24th, 1865.¹ A gamekeeper shot another at Lymm on November 4th, 1880,³ and in the following year Mr. A. Cookson killed one at Oakmere, which is

¹ H. E. Smith, *op. cit.* p. 236.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 313.

³ T. Davies, *Field*, vol. lvi. p. 715. 1880.

now in his possession.¹ Mr. H. Garland has an example that he trapped in winter near Aldford, using a goose for a bait.¹ We have seen a bird which was shot on Carrington Moss some time in the eighties, and was stuffed by Samuel Penney of Ashton-on-Mersey. As recently as the autumn of 1895, a Rough-legged Buzzard frequented the moors at Goyts Clough for several days, until it was taken in a trap baited with a dead rabbit, by one of the keepers. It is now preserved at the Cat and Fiddle Inn.

GOLDEN EAGLE.

AQUILA CHRYSÆTUS (Linnæus).

[In 1845, the late T. W. Barlow recorded the occurrence of a Golden Eagle at Somerford Park.² He mentioned that the bird, which had been preserved, was in the possession of Sir C. P. Shakerley; but Sir Walter Shakerley tells us that, though he has often heard of an Eagle which was killed at Somerford, all trace of it has now been lost. Mr. Barlow also stated that a Golden Eagle had been taken some years previously at Eaton. The Rev. F. O. Morris in his *History of British Birds* alludes to these two birds, and adds that 'another was captured in Cheshire.'³ In none of these three cases was any evidence of identification adduced; and as the majority of Golden Eagles reported from time to time in the country prove on investigation to be White-tailed Eagles, it is inadvisable on such slight grounds to include the Golden Eagle in the Cheshire list.]

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 313.

² *Zoologist*, ser. i. vol. iii. p. 1022. 1845.

³ *History of British Birds*, vol. i. p. 15.

WHITE-TAILED EAGLE.

HALIAËTUS ALBICILLA (Linnæus).

The White-tailed Eagle is not met with so frequently on the west as upon the east coast of England, and there are only three recorded instances of its occurrence in Cheshire. Brockholes once shot at one at Leasowe, and the bird was subsequently found dead in a field in the neighbourhood.¹ There is a bird in immature plumage in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, which was obtained some years ago on the Eaton Estate.² This, as Dr. Dobie suggests, is probably the female recorded by Mr. E. Ward as having been shot 'near Chester,' on January 5th, 1863.³ A specimen obtained at Davenham, near Northwich, some time prior to the year 1875, was presented by Major Harper of Davenham Hall to the Peter Street Museum, Manchester, and is now in the collection at Owens College, Manchester.⁴

SPARROW HAWK.

ACCIPITER NISUS (Linnæus).

Although he has done his utmost, the gamekeeper has not yet succeeded in exterminating this bird, and most of the larger woods in Cheshire, even if devoted to the preservation of game, shelter one or more pairs in the breeding season. In winter the Sparrow Hawk frequents the more open country, and often the tell-

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 4.² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 314.³ *Field*, vol. xxi. p. 98. 1863.⁴ 'Redshank,' *Manchester City News*, August 21, 1875.

tale heap of feathers by a hedgeside shows where a Thrush, Ring Dove, or other bird has fallen a victim to its prowess. At this season it usually hunts over a regular beat, and may be seen passing a given spot about the same time day after day. The pSarrow Hawk's audacity, when in pursuit of its prey, is well known. Mr. S. Radcliffe tells us that at Mottram, a few years ago, one chased a Robin through a house into the kitchen, where both were captured.

The nesting-habits of the Sparrow Hawk have occasioned much controversy; some observers affirm that the bird always builds its own nest; whilst others as definitely assert that it utilises the disused nest of some other species. In our opinion, neither rule is invariably followed, the bird building a nest, or appropriating another, according to circumstances. Speaking of Wirral, Brockholes says:—‘This hawk always makes its own nest here. If this be robbed, a second is occasionally built; but generally the second laying of eggs is placed on any old nest which is sufficiently large. If robbed a second time, a third set of eggs is sometimes laid. I once found a third laying of eggs in some leaves which had accumulated in a fork of a tree.’¹ The nest of the previous year is sometimes utilised. In May 1887, a gamekeeper at Plumbley pointed out to us a Scotch fir, where in 1886 he had captured three adult Sparrow Hawks in succession by placing a gin in the nest. On climbing to the nest, we found the rusted and unsprung trap covered by a thick layer of larch twigs, upon which were six eggs in various stages of incubation.

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 4.

KITE.

MILVUS ICTINUS, Savigny.

Although, no doubt, at one time the Kite was a common resident in the Cheshire woodlands, where it was known as the 'Gled,'¹ it has only been noticed very occasionally within recent years. Three or four birds have been obtained in the south-west of the county, having probably wandered from those districts in Mid Wales where the Kite still occasionally manages to rear a brood in spite of the constant robbery of its eggs by unscrupulous collectors.

Mr. H. E. Forrest has afforded us an opportunity of perusing a letter addressed to the late W. E. Beckwith. The writer, Mr. J. M. Howells, states that while otter-hunting at Shavington Park about the year 1884, the late Harry Shaw of Shrewsbury drew his attention to two Kites circling at a great height overhead. Shavington is on the county border, part of the park being in Shropshire.

An immature bird was shot at Eaton in September 1888, and a second was seen at the same time by Mr. H. Garland. In the winter of the same year another was seen at Oakmere by Mr. A. Cookson. On May 30th, 1892, a Kite was shot by Mr. J. Burgess at Bruen Stapleford, near Tarvin.² Dr. Dobie informs us that this bird was in his possession for some weeks. Mr. R. Newstead tells us that Mr. A. Cookson saw another Kite at the end of February 1894, in the neighbourhood of Oakmere.

¹ R. Holland, *A Glossary of Words used in the County of Chester*, p. 143. 1884-86.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 314.

AMERICAN SWALLOW-TAILED KITE.

ELANOÏDES FURCATUS (Linnæus).

[At the sale of the Macclesfield Museum in June 1861, a Swallow-tailed Kite, said to have been shot on the Mersey, was disposed of for £9, 10s.¹ The claims of this Kite to rank as a British bird are exceedingly slender, and it is not even clear that the Macclesfield specimen was referable to this species. Even if it were so, there is, as Mr. Howard Saunders points out,² no evidence that this bird was obtained in a wild state, although it may have been brought over in a ship.]

HONEY BUZZARD.

PERNIS APIVORUS (Linnæus).

It is only very rarely that the Honey Buzzard has been noticed in Cheshire, and we know of only five occurrences during the last sixty years. Captain Congreve has one in his collection which was obtained at Burton on September 22nd, 1841, and Mr. H. Garland has another which he shot at Aldford about thirty years later.³ At Bowdon, on the 27th of May 1872, Mr. F. Nicholson obtained an adult male from a gamekeeper who had shot it a few minutes previously. It had evidently just despoiled a Song Thrush's nest, for there were fragments of egg-shell at the base of its beak, and upon dissection Mr. Nicholson found two young

¹ F. Buckland, *Field*, June 22, 1861.

² Mitchell, *Birds of Lancashire*, 2nd edition, 1892, p. 130.

³ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 315.

birds in its stomach.¹ This specimen is now in the Warrington Museum. In the early eighties, one, now in the possession of Mr. H. Marsland, was shot at Wood Bank, Stockport; and we have seen an adult female of the dark form which was shot at Capesthorpe in July or August 1897, by a man named William Crowhurst.

Having regard to the time of year when the birds, both adults, were killed at Bowdon and Capesthorpe, and the fact that the Honey Buzzard has nested in many different places in England, it is possible that this species might have bred in Cheshire had they not met with the fate meted out to large raptorial birds immediately they appear.

GREENLAND FALCON.

FALCO CANDICANS, J. F. Gmelin.

We have seen a specimen of the Greenland Falcon in the collection of the late C. S. Gregson, which was obtained from a sailor who had killed it on a vessel coming into the port of Liverpool. The evidence as to the locality where it was captured is not altogether conclusive, as the bird had been skinned by the sailor before it came into Mr. Gregson's possession. This example was originally recorded by Mr. H. E. Smith as an Iceland Falcon,² but Mr. F. S. Mitchell alludes to it as a Greenland Falcon in his *Birds of Lancashire*.³ It is in adult plumage, and is undoubtedly referable to the Greenland species, in which the prevailing ground-colour is pure white.

¹ *Zoologist*, ser. II. vol. ix. p. 4237.

² Smith, *op. cit.* p. 235.

³ Mitchell, *op. cit.* p. 131.

In the middle of October 1865, the late R. S. Eddleston observed two large white Falcons near Bowdon, which were sporting with a flock of Starlings.¹ A few days later a 'Jer Falcon' was shot by John Shaw, a farmer at Biddulph, just beyond the Staffordshire border.² As Biddulph is less than twenty miles from Bowdon, it is probable that this was one of the birds seen by Mr. Eddleston; but our efforts to trace the specimen have been unsuccessful, and from the meagre description published at the time it is impossible to say to which of the three British species of Gyr Falcon it should be attributed.

PEREGRINE FALCON.

FALCO PEREGRINUS, Tunstall.

The sandy coastline of Cheshire offers no inducement for the Peregrine Falcon to breed; and although some of the rugged escarpments of the millstone grit in Longdendale afford suitable nesting-places, the constant vigilance of the gamekeepers makes it impossible for the birds to establish themselves. There are now no resident Peregrines in the county, but within recent years there was an eyrie at Manley. The late J. F. Robinson wrote in 1882:—'I have a fine specimen, a young male in splendid plumage, of the Peregrine Falcon, which was shot two years ago at Manley. For some two or three seasons a pair annually bred in the crags at the summit of Simmons Hill, Manley, where they were protected by the late Captain Harry Heron, R.N. Since his death, however, through

¹ Harrison, *Zoologist*, ser. II. vol. i. p. 30. 1866.

² *Manchester Courier*, November 4, 1865.

persecution they have entirely disappeared from the locality.’¹

Brockholes does not appear to have noticed the Peregrine Falcon in Wirral, although it occasionally frequents the coast and marshes in autumn and winter in pursuit of the wildfowl. Byerley mentions that the bird has been seen at New Brighton;² Captain Congreve has one in his collection labelled ‘Burton, 1840’;³ and Mr. Edward Comber has another, which was shot in the same neighbourhood whilst chasing a couple of Sheld Duck.

In the south-west of the county these Falcons occur not infrequently in the winter months, and Mr. R. Newstead, who has several times found the remains of Redwings in their stomachs, thinks that they follow these birds on their migration. Dr. Dobie mentions that Mr. H. Garland has a male in his collection which was obtained at Eaton, and that there are two other specimens in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, from the same estate. One of these is dated January 16th, 1890, and the other November 17th, 1891. Eight days after the last-mentioned bird was obtained, a female was shot by Mr. Lyle Smith’s gamekeeper at Barrow. The bird has also been obtained at Aldford and Ince.³

The Peregrine Falcon is rarer in Mid Cheshire, although Mr. J. Kenyon, the Earl of Egerton’s head-keeper, has seen it on the Tatton Estate.

It is well known as a visitor in autumn to the grouse-moors of Longdendale, and scarcely a winter passes without one or more being killed. We have seen in the gamekeepers’ cottages in this valley birds in both

¹ *Manchester City News*, July 8, 1882.

² Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 10.

³ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 315.

mature and immature plumage, which have been shot or trapped within recent years; and on March 11th, 1899, we were fortunate in having a good view of a Peregrine Falcon as it sailed to and fro with outstretched motionless wings, above the moors at the head of Crowden Brook.

HOBBY.

FALCO SUBBUTEO, Linnæus.

We know of no specific instance of the Hobby breeding in Cheshire within recent years, although 'Redshank,' writing in 1875, states that it has occasionally nested in the county¹—indeed, at the present time the bird only occurs rarely, even on migration.

Speaking of Wirral, Brockholes says that the Hobby 'is occasionally obtained in spring and autumn in Burton and elsewhere.'² Mr. W. Cox informed Dr. Dobie that he had preserved a specimen which was shot at Oulton Park;³ and Dr. J. D. Sainter records the occurrence of another 'two or three miles south of Macclesfield.'⁴ Mr. Wright Johnson of Prestwich has a female Hobby in his collection, which was obtained in Cheshire some years ago; and Mr. W. Beaumont tells us that in 1879 he stuffed one that had been captured between Staleybridge and Mottram-in-Longdendale. Mr. A. Newman tells us that he shot a Hobby on Frodsham Marsh in October 1892.

¹ *Manchester City News*, July 24, 1875.

² Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 4.

³ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 316.

⁴ *Nature*, vol. ix. p. 132. 1873.

RED-FOOTED FALCON.

FALCO VESPERTINUS, Linnæus.

This rare Falcon has only been obtained once in Cheshire. An adult female was shot by the gamekeeper of Mr. R. H. Greg in May 1873, at Styal, near Wilmslow.¹

MERLIN.

FALCO ÆSALON, Tunstall.

Many of the shepherds and gamekeepers in Longden-dale can remember the time when this beautiful little Falcon was fairly common; and although its numbers have greatly decreased, owing to the misguided zeal of the latter, a few pairs still nest annually amongst the heather, or on the crags in some of the more lonely cloughs. In the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, are four young birds in down, which Oldham obtained alive on June 18th, 1894, from a keeper who had taken them from a bare spot on a ledge of rock near the head of Crowden Brook. The feathers of the wings and tail hardly showed through the down; but the little creatures, already exhibiting the gameness and ferocity of their kind, threw themselves on their backs when handled, showing fight with beak and talons. We have observed the same characteristic in even younger birds which we have found in the disused nests of Carrion Crows, on the cliffs of the Anglesea coast. Possibly an odd pair of Merlins may succeed in rearing their young on the moors east of Macclesfield, as they

¹ F. Nicholson, *Zoologist*, ser. II. vol. ix. p. 4238.

undoubtedly do just beyond the Staffordshire border; and 'Peregrine,' who resided at Forest Chapel, states in one of his articles on Falconry, written in 1859, that the bird occasionally breeds in Cheshire.¹

Brockholes describes the Merlin as a spring and autumn visitor to Wirral, and adds that a few birds remain through the winter in the Dee Marshes, where they sometimes prey upon the Ring Doves which feed there;² whilst Mr. R. Newstead says that the bird is occasionally met with in winter in the marshes of the Mersey Estuary near Thornton and Ince.³

Examples, chiefly in immature plumage, are obtained from time to time during the winter months on the Plain; and we have seen an adult female which was shot in the water-meadows near Sale on October 3rd, 1896. It is not improbable that the Merlin used to nest on the extensive mosses in the north of the county before their reclamation. On May 5th, 1883, we found a freshly-killed bird gibbeted on Carrington Moss, which was at that time an extensive grouse-moor.

KESTREL.

FALCO TINNUNCULUS, Linnæus.

Windhover.

Undoubtedly the Kestrel is the best-known Hawk in Cheshire, being met with sparingly in all parts of the county. It would, however, be much more abundant than it is, if gamekeepers and their employers would take the trouble to acquaint themselves with the fact that it subsists almost entirely upon field-mice, voles,

¹ *Field*, vol. xiii. p. 27. 1859.

² Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 4.

³ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 316.



A CLOUGH IN LONGDENDALE.

and beetles, whose fragmentary remains are readily discerned in the pellets of the bird.

In Wirral and the Plain, the Kestrel breeds in woods and plantations, utilising the old nest of a Ring Dove, Magpie, or other large bird. Brockholes has known the eggs to be laid on the old nest of a Sparrow Hawk, and states that the bird sometimes breeds in a hollow tree.¹ In the Eastern Hills the eggs are usually laid upon the rocky ledge of an escarpment, or in a disused quarry.

During the autumn and winter the Kestrel does not keep so closely to the plantations and pheasant-coverts, but frequents the more open country. It is then that the bird is more frequently noticed, as it hangs poised with rapidly vibrating wings and depressed tail, searching the pastures for its prey, or as it glides with easy flight to repeat these tactics in another situation.

The female Kestrel often exhibits considerable pluck when she imagines that her brood is in danger. When near her nest, Coward has seen one hover screaming above him, making repeated dashes downwards to within ten or a dozen feet of his head, although at the time he held a gun in his hand. To try the effect he pointed the weapon at the bird, but only increased her anger; and she never went out of gun-shot as long as he remained in the vicinity of the nest.

OSPREY.

PANDION HALIAËTUS (Linnæus).

The Osprey has rarely wandered to the county, but has been noticed on three occasions—two of which

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 4.

were in spring—in Mid Cheshire, where the well-stocked meres offer an attraction to this piscivorous species.

About the end of April 1865, an Osprey frequented Rostherne Mere for several days, and was seen to capture fish and convey them to a solitary tree on the margin of the mere in order to devour them. By lying in wait, one of the gamekeepers shot the bird, which proved to be an adult, in the act of eating a two-pound bream.¹ Mr. H. Harrison, into whose possession it subsequently came, exhibited the bird at a meeting of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society on May 15th, 1865. The specimen is now preserved in the Warrington Museum.

A second Osprey was shot by Mr. Hatton, Lord Delamere's head-keeper, on or about May 20th, 1890, at Petty Pool in Vale Royal.²

In the winter of 1893-94, two Ospreys were observed for some days by Mr. J. Kenyon, head-keeper to the Earl of Egerton, who saw them take fish on several occasions from Tatton Mere. One of these birds was shot by an under-keeper, but it dropped in a thick wood and was not recovered.

¹ *Zoologist*, ser. II. vol. i. p. 30. 1866.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 317.

ORDER STEGANOPODES.

FAMILY PELECANIDÆ.

COMMON CORMORANT.

PHALACROCORAX CARBO (Linnæus).

The Cheshire coast offers no suitable nesting-place for the Cormorant, but the bird breeds in some numbers on the rocky headlands of the Great and Little Ormes in Carnarvonshire, and is, as might be expected, 'not uncommon at times in the estuary of the Dee and on the Dee Marshes.'¹ It is also to be met with fishing on the sandbanks in Liverpool Bay.

Stragglers and storm-driven birds are occasionally reported from the meres. Dr. Dobie records that one visited the pool at Ashton Hayes in 1893, and that Mr. A. Cookson has two immature birds which were shot at Oakmere in the late seventies.² Another is recorded from Marbury Mere, near Northwich;³ and we have seen an adult which was shot on Rostherne Mere on November 14th, 1896.

GANNET.

SULA BASSANA (Linnæus).

At certain seasons the Gannet visits Liverpool Bay in some numbers, but it is not often seen close inshore,

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 16.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 317.

³ J. E. Smith, *Manchester City News*, May 16, 1874.

where the sandbanks and shallow waters of the estuaries are unsuited to the habits of the surface-swimming fish upon which it principally subsists. Occasionally, however, the bird has been observed in the estuaries on both sides of Wirral. Captain Congreve has an immature bird which was obtained at Burton in June 1830; and Mr. Townshend Logan informed Dr. Dobie that he had seen two birds flying over Upton, near Chester, evidently passing between the Mersey and Dee.¹ Brockholes had a specimen in immature plumage which was killed on the Dee.²

Storm-driven birds, always immature, have occurred from time to time in various inland localities. One, now in the Warrington Museum, was picked up alive at Lymm by Mr. E. Gibson on January 15th, 1865; and we have seen another that was found in an exhausted condition in a farmyard at Ringway in October 1894, and died two days after its capture. In the autumn of the same year a dead Gannet was found by a grouse-driving party on the moors at the head of Little Crowden Brook, Longdendale.

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 318.

² Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 16.

ORDER HERODIONES.

FAMILY ARDEIDÆ.

COMMON HERON.

ARDEA CINEREA, Linnæus.

Crane, Yarn, Yern, Varn, Longnix.

Until quite recent times there were heronries on many of the large estates in Cheshire; the meres, trout-streams, and marlpits, and the shallow waters of the estuaries, furnishing an abundant supply of food for the voracious birds. Owing to a variety of causes, such as the felling of the nesting-trees, increased fish-preservation, and the fact that the bird is considered a great prize by every prowling gunner, Herons have been greatly reduced in numbers, and at the present time only two colonies—at Eaton and Tabley—exist within the county borders. In spite of this fact, the bird may be met with in all parts of the county: we have seen as many as eight or nine at one time on the saltings near Burton Point, and we seldom visit any of the meres without seeing one or more feeding in the shallows. We frequently flush Herons from the trout-streams in the woodlands of the Plain, and Mr. N. Neave tells us that he has often met with single birds in the less-frequented cloughs among the hills near Macclesfield.

Mr. R. Newstead, in his exhaustive paper on 'The Heron and Heronries of Cheshire and North Wales,' says of the colony at Eaton Park, the seat of the Duke

of Westminster:—‘This is the largest of our Heronries, and is situate in the “Duckwood,” near the Hall. It consists of between forty and fifty nests, nearly all of which are built in the tops of very tall willow-trees. Some nests are quite isolated, others are in groups of various numbers. In eight trees I counted twenty-one nests; but owing to the numerous and intricate ditches which traverse the whole of the wood like the paths of a labyrinth, one has to be satisfied with exploring one-half of its dimensions, especially in wet seasons. On one occasion when visiting this Heronry, the ditches had overflowed their banks to such an extent that the only means of getting from place to place, was by laying a ladder over the large pools of water. . . . Those [nests] that I examined . . . had little or no lining in them; one nest was lined with a few dead stems of the purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*, Linnaeus), which grows abundantly in and near the wood; the others had nothing but thin sticks broken very short.’ Speaking of the well-mounted group in the Grosvenor Museum, which was obtained from Eaton Park, Mr. Newstead says:—‘When taking the nest and young, one of the birds flew away into an adjoining tree, and when dislodged it came down in an almost perpendicular direction. Intervening between it and the ground there was a small branch, upon which the bird tried to alight; failing this, it hooked its long beak over the branch and tried to gain a foothold, but was unable to do so. I thought it very remarkable that the bird should be able to hang on to an object by simply placing its closed beak on the branch, but such was the case, and as I kept the birds for many days after as living models, I was much interested to see them on several occasions use their beaks for supporting

their bodies, in situations where it was difficult to get a foothold.¹

Not only is the Eaton Heronry the largest in the county, but it is the most prosperous, for whereas Mr. Newstead found forty or fifty nests, Mr. F. Nicholson, writing twenty years previously, estimated the numbers as about thirty.² There was formerly a small heronry on the Dee near Eaton, at a spot where the branches of two large willow-trees, meeting above the river, formed a natural arch, which gave rise to the name of Heron Bridge. This was possibly the original site of the Eaton colony.¹

The other existing heronry, at Tabley Park, near Knutsford, was established in 1871, when a single pair nested there. In 1874 there were three nests, and by 1881 there were about a dozen.² Writing to Mr. Newstead in 1893, Mr. G. O. Day said there were then about fifteen nests, built in a clump of chestnuts by the lake.¹

In addition to these, we have records of nine heronries which, owing to various causes, are no longer in existence. There was one near the pool at Arley, but the nesting-trees were felled about the middle of the century, and the birds left the neighbourhood. Another existed at Aston, near Frodsham, until quite recently. Mr. Nicholson states that it had been established for many years, and was referred to by Sir Arthur Aston in letters dating back to the first quarter of the century. He adds that for many years twenty had been the average number of nests, but Mr. Newstead was informed that they had dwindled to about a dozen in 1888, and that two years later the birds ceased to build.

¹ *Proc. Chester Soc. Nat. Science and Lit.*, No. iv. pp. 226-243.

² *Man. City News*, May 16, 1874. *Man. Guardian*, Dec. 28, 1881.

The gamekeeper on the estate informs us that numbers of Herons still frequent the locality. In 1857 a pair of Herons chose some firs on the margin of the marsh at Burton, in Wirral, for a nesting-site. Ten years later there were about twenty nests, but here, as at Arley and Aston, the birds were constantly persecuted by the Rooks and Jackdaws, and in 1874 only two broods were hatched out. In 1880 a heavy gale, which blew down several of the trees, was the death-blow of the colony, and the birds have not nested there since that date. It is said that the heronry which formerly existed near the Hall at Carden, near Broxton, was destroyed on account of the effluvium arising from the putrid fish-refuse. About 1850, the late Lord Combermere had the heronry at Combermere Abbey destroyed on account of the havoc which the birds wrought amongst the fish.^{1,2}

In the early part of the century there was a heronry near the Old Man Pool in the Park at Dunham Massey. There is no record of the origin of this heronry; but owing to persecution and the fact that some of the nesting-trees were blown down, the birds left the locality in 1833, and after an ineffectual attempt to settle at Tatton, migrated to Arley.³ Birds still frequently visit the Pool at Dunham Massey. At Hooton, a heronry, perhaps the oldest in Cheshire, was destroyed by the construction of the Manchester Ship Canal about the year 1890. Mr. Nicholson says that the birds abandoned the place in 1870, but returned in 1874, when there were six nests. At the time of its demolition, Mr. Newstead states that the average

¹ *Man. City News*, May 16, 1874. *Man. Guardian*, Dec. 28, 1881.

² *Proc. Chester Soc. Nat. Science and Lit.*, No. iv. pp. 226-243.

³ J. E. Smith, *Man. City News*, May 16, 1874.

number of nests in the colony was about twenty. A few Herons used to nest some years ago in the Marsh Plantation at Ince; but, though many birds still frequent the neighbourhood, they have not bred there lately. An island in the pool in Oulton Park was tenanted by a number of Herons until about the year 1850, when the birds deserted the locality.^{1,2}

As Herons may often be seen fishing in the meres and pools during the breeding season, there can be little doubt that odd pairs occasionally nest in secluded woods. Byerley mentions that a pair nested at Newton-cum-Larton.³ In 1888, a brood was reared in a wood at Balderton, near Chester, and at one time a pair used to nest in the beech-wood in Alderley Park.² There was a nest in a fir near Tatton Mere, which was occupied for many years,¹ and Mr. Nicholson informs us that two or three isolated pairs bred on the Tatton Estate in 1896. Birds have also nested at Adlington within recent years, and some time ago a single nest was found in a covert in Lyme Park.

The diet of the Heron is very varied, and is by no means restricted to fish, the bird readily eating small mammals and even young waterfowl. 'Some pellets from the Eaton heronry that Mr. Newstead examined, consisted almost entirely of the fur of rats, although, curiously enough, no traces of bones were discernible. A bird that was taken from a nest at Hooton and kept in captivity for two years, subsisted almost altogether upon animal food, and never had any fish during that period. This bird would eat as many as five rats at a single meal, and, except when very hungry, always repaired

¹ *Man. City News*, May 16, 1874. *Man. Guardian*, Dec. 28, 1881.

² *Proc. Chester Soc. Nat. Science and Lit.*, No. iv. pp. 226-243.

³ Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 18.

to a jar of water in which it immersed its food before swallowing it. This bird used to be in constant attendance upon the gardeners if they were digging, in order to pounce upon any worms or insects which were turned up by the spade.¹

PURPLE HERON.

ARDEA PURPUREA, Linnæus.

This rare wanderer from the continent of Europe seldom reaches the west coast of England, and has only once been observed in Cheshire. On April 7th, 1887, an adult Purple Heron was shot in the fields between Alderley Edge and Wilmslow. It was erroneously attributed to Lancashire in the *Zoologist*,² and the mistake was repeated in the second edition of the *Birds of Lancashire*.³ The bird is now in the collection of Colonel Dixon at Astle Hall.

NIGHT HERON.

NYCTICORAX GRISEUS (Linnæus).

To the southern and eastern counties of England the Night Heron is a not infrequent visitor, but in the west it is much rarer, and has only once been obtained in Cheshire. In the summer of 1865, an adult was shot on the Mersey near Northenden by a man named George Smith. His son, who still has the bird, informed us that he remembered hearing it on several evenings 'at haymaking time, making a noise like a person vomiting.' In the case containing this Heron

¹ *Proc. Chester Soc. Nat. Science and Lit.*, No. iv. pp. 226-243.

² T. Pickin, *Zoologist*, ser. III. vol. xi. p. 432. 1887. ³ P. 145.

there is a cutting from a local newspaper, recording the shooting of the bird, across which the date, 'July 16th, 1865,' is written in ink.

LITTLE BITTERN.

ARDETTA MINUTA (Linnæus).

The Little Bittern, an occasional visitor to the British Islands, has only been obtained twice in Cheshire. A female was shot by Mr. C. H. Poole on Marbury Mere, near Whitchurch, in July 1881.¹ It was preserved by the late Harry Shaw of Shrewsbury, and is now in Mr. Poole's collection. On October 29th, 1893, Mr. James Gibson killed a male in the marshes of the Wirral coast near Wallasey.² This bird is now in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester.

BITTERN.

BOTAURUS STELLARIS (Linnæus).

Bittor, Bitter-bump.

Until early in the present century the Bittern probably nested regularly in the reed-beds fringing the meres, for in the country lying between Northwich and Macclesfield we have been told by men advanced in years that their parents were well acquainted with its booming notes. But in Cheshire, as elsewhere, the Bittern is now only known as a winter visitor, being occasionally shot in various places in the lowlands.

¹ Cf. Forrest, *Fauna of Shropshire*, p. 140.

² *Field*, vol. lxxxii. p. 791. 1893.

Upton, Bidston Marsh, Hoylake, and Irby are mentioned by Byerley as localities in Wirral where the bird has been seen.¹ Brockholes records one that was shot in 1857 or 1858 by a farmer as it rose from a pond near Higher Tranmere,² and another was obtained between Upton and Greasby in 1892.³

Dr. Dobie mentions three taken on the Eaton Estate, one of which is in the possession of Mr. H. Garland, who states that the Bittern frequently visited the Duckwood at Eaton in past years. One was shot at Oakmere some thirty years ago, and another by Mr. A. Cookson at Delamere about the year 1887. An example now in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, was shot on Tarporley Racecourse on January 25th, 1893, by Mr. J. Rutter, who says he saw another bird in company with it; and one has been obtained at Tiverton in the same neighbourhood.³

A male was shot on the Mersey at Thelwall on January 12th, 1854, by Mr. James Taylor.⁴ Mr. J. W. Lewis tells us that a Bittern was shot near Alsager in 1895; another, a male, was killed on December 21st of the same year at Marbury, near Whitchurch;⁵ and Mr. W. H. Peterkin has seen one that was obtained at Lymm in December 1897. The late T. W. Barlow had a specimen which was shot on Rudheath by a man named Isaac Gallimore, who informed him that in former years the boom of the Bittern was not infrequently heard at Brereton Mere.⁶

¹ Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 18.

² Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 11.

³ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 319.

⁴ N. Cooke, *Zoologist*, ser. i. vol. xii. p. 4254. 1854.

⁵ Forrest, *Fauna of Shropshire*, p. 140.

⁶ T. W. Barlow, MS.

FAMILY PLATALEIDÆ.

SPOONBILL.

PLATALEA LEUCORODIA, Linnæus.

The Spoonbill, like the Night Heron and Little Bittern, is very rare in the west of England, but it has occurred at least twice in Cheshire. Brockholes says that 'a specimen was shot about the year 1859 on the Dee Marshes, near Burton,'¹ and another is said to have been shot at Burton in 1864;² but, as Dr. Dobie suggests, these are probably one and the same bird.³ An adult in summer plumage, shot at Tatton Mere about forty or fifty years ago by Mr. R. Nunnerley, senior, is now in the collection of Mr. R. Nunnerley of Congleton.

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 11.

² H. E. Smith, *op. cit.* p. 241.

³ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 320.

ORDER ANSERES.

FAMILY ANATIDÆ.

GREY LAG GOOSE.

ANSER CINEREUS, Meyer.

Even on the east coast of England the Grey Lag Goose is now only occasionally met with, whilst on the west it is very rare. Dr. Dobie informs us that Captain Congreve has a water-colour sketch of a Goose, marked 'Grey Lag or Common Wildgoose, Burton, October 18th, 1841, *Anas anser*,' in which the nail on the bill is distinctly white. In 1846 the late T. W. Barlow recorded the fact that a 'Gray Goose (*Anser palustris*)' was taken about that date near Holmes Chapel, and remarked on its great rarity.¹ Some years ago Mr. R. Nunnerley shot a Grey Lag out of a skein of eight or nine birds which were crossing the Buxton Road about a mile and a half east of Macclesfield. The bird was not preserved, but Mr. Nunnerley, who has had wide experience as a wildfowler, is sure of its identity and well remembers the characteristic white nail.

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE.

ANSER ALBIFRONS (Scopoli).

The White-fronted Goose used to be a well-known visitor to the tidal waters of the Mersey Estuary in

¹ *Zoologist*, ser. I. vol. iv. p. 1501. 1846.

winter, coming down at night from the adjacent mosses;¹ and Brockholes says that it occurs occasionally in winter on the Dee Marshes.² Now, however, it is less frequently met with, although examples are now and then obtained in its old haunts. Mr. R. Newstead examined one in the flesh, which had been shot on the Mersey, near Ince, in the winter of 1885; and Mr. R. Newstead, senior, saw another freshly-killed bird at Thornton-le-Moors on January 29th, 1894.³ Mr. L. Jones informs us that he saw White-fronted Geese this same January at Hilbre Island.

It is impossible to determine the species of the Grey Geese which we have often seen and heard flying at a great height in a V-shaped formation over the country near Bowdon and Sale, but they are probably referable to this species or the Pink-footed Goose. The same remark applies to the Geese which used to be shot on Carrington Moss until a few years ago, but which were always relegated to the pot without being identified.

BEAN GOOSE.

ANSER SEGETUM (J. F. Gmelin).

The Grey Geese that visit the Dee Marshes in winter are seldom identified, even when shot, and although the Bean Goose probably occurs from time to time, there is little positive evidence of the fact. A bird which was shot in January 1872, on the Dee Marsh near Burton, was examined by Brockholes and referred by him to this species.²

¹ *Naturalists' Scrap-book*, p. 228.

² Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 13.

³ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 320.

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE.

ANSER BRACHYRHYNCHUS, Baillon.

Judging by the number of birds which have been identified, the Pink-footed Goose appears to be commoner than the Bean Goose in the estuary of the Dee. There is a female in the Grosvenor Museum, which was obtained inland at Tattenhall on December 29th, 1890.

Dr. Dobie examined some that were killed out of a flock on the marsh opposite Burton Point in the winter of 1892-93, one of which is now in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester. Again, in the winter of 1893-94, he saw two others, which had been obtained in the same locality, exposed for sale in Chester.¹ Mr. R. Newstead tells us that from two to three hundred birds frequented the Dee Marshes and adjacent lands in the hard winter of 1894-95, but only a few were obtained. He examined one which had been shot on a stubble field where the flock was feeding.

On December 26th, 1898, we saw a 'gaggle' of Grey Geese, numbering from four to five hundred birds, on the Dee Marshes between Burton and Denhall. They were far too wary to allow us to approach near enough to identify them, but they were almost certainly referable to this species. When we first saw them, the birds were feeding in the receding tide on the grass growing in patches below high-water mark; but as we approached, they rose, 'clonking' loudly, and flew down the estuary to a sandbank, on which they alighted.

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 320.

BERNACLE GOOSE.

BERNICLA LEUCOPSIS (Bechstein).

Brockholes, writing in 1874, states that 'prior to 1862, this species was very common on the Dee Marshes, now it is very scarce; sometimes a whole winter passes without any being seen';¹ and Dr. Dobie says that it is 'now very rare, if indeed it ever visits us.' Captain Congreve has one in his collection at Burton.²

BRENT GOOSE.

BERNICLA BRENTA (Pallas).

The Brent Goose still visits the Dee Estuary in winter in considerable numbers. On February 7th, 1888, Mr. A. O. Walker saw about two hundred on the Marshes.² There is a specimen in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, which was obtained at Burton on December 14th, 1884. Mr. L. Jones has one which he shot at Hilbre Island in February 1895; and in the same month one was killed on Ince Marsh by Mr. Warburton. Inland, a Brent Goose was shot at Combermere on November 5th, 1895.³

The Canada Goose, *Bernicla canadensis* (Linnaeus), has been long naturalised in England, and to-day exists in a perfectly wild state in Cheshire, breeding on many of the meres. Though there is no reason to suppose that any of the birds which have been shot on the Dee Marshes and elsewhere were immigrants from the American continent, some mention must be made of

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 13.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 321.

³ H. E. Forrester, *The Fauna of Shropshire*, p. 145.

the species in a county avifauna. Canada Geese may nearly always be seen on the meres at Marbury near Northwich, Rostherne, Tatton, Mere, Arley, Capesthorne, and Alderley, and frequently on smaller sheets of water or even secluded ponds. In the winter it is not unusual to see flocks, varying from half a dozen to two or three hundred birds, feeding in the fields, or flying from one sheet of water to another.

Examples of the Egyptian Goose, *Chenalopex aegyptiaca* (Linnæus), a species kept on many private waters, have been sometimes obtained; and about forty years ago a Bar-headed Goose (*Anser indicus*, Stephens) was shot on the marshes at Burton;¹ but there can be no doubt whatever that these birds had escaped from captivity.

WHOOPER.

CYGNUS MUSICUS, Bechstein.

The Whooper is a not infrequent visitor in winter to the Dee and Mersey Estuaries. Byerley says that examples have been seen near Upton and Leasowe,² and Brockholes records that in the winter of 1870-71, Mr. Lawton of Denhall shot one in the estuary of the Dee.³ This was no doubt one of the herd of about thirty birds that Mr. A. O. Walker saw on January 12th, 1871, between Bagillt and Holywell, on the Welsh side of the estuary.⁴ Dr. Dobie has occasionally heard of Whoopers being seen on the Dee Estuary and on the Mersey near Ince.⁴

¹ *Zoologist*, ser. I. vol. xvi. p. 5988. 1858.

² Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 20.

³ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 14.

⁴ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 321.

BEWICK'S SWAN.

CYGNUS BEWICKI, Yarrell.

Bewick's Swan is apparently a very rare visitor to the Cheshire coast, and its capture has only been recorded on one occasion. Brockholes states that he examined a bird of this species which was shot by Mr. Lawton on December 14th, 1871, in the estuary of the Dee.¹

The Mute Swan, *Cygnus olor* (J. F. Gmelin), exists in a semi-domesticated condition on most of the meres and ornamental waters in Cheshire, and birds may frequently be seen flying at a slight altitude across country from mere to mere. The beat of their immense wings, audible at a considerable distance, attracts the attention of passers-by, who often report the birds as 'Wild Swans.' Mute Swans may be sometimes seen feeding on the sandbanks and ooze of the Dee Estuary, but there is no reason whatever to suppose that any of those, shot from time to time on the Dee or elsewhere, are really wild birds.

COMMON SHELD DUCK.

TADORNA CORNUTA (S. G. Gmelin).

From the London and North-Western Railway, which skirts the Welsh shore of the Dee Estuary, numbers of Sheld Duck may always be seen at low water scattered over the sandbanks and mud-flats. Most of these birds breed in the sandhills near the Point of Air in Flintshire, but a few pairs still nest on the Cheshire coast. On Hilbre Island, where the Shield Duck nests every

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 14.

year, Mr. L. Jones, in 1892, dug out eight eggs from a burrow within ten yards of the look-out station. One or two broods are generally reared in the neighbourhood of Heswall and Burton, in spite of the persecution of the fisher-lads, who search eagerly for eggs and young birds.

The Sheld Duck formerly bred on the sandhills near Hoylake, where Mr. W. E. Sharp took a nest in 1876. Writing to Dr. Dobie, he said, 'This must have been one of the last occasions of its breeding, as that year the golf-links were extended over the ground which they frequented.'¹ Mr. H. E. Smith, writing in 1865, said the bird then nested in the neighbourhood of Little Meols and on Caldý Hill, and that twenty years previously it bred along the whole range of sandhills on the Cheshire shore.²

Dr. Dobie states that prior to 1873, nests were frequently found on the Mersey shore between Stanlow and Ince.¹ A few pairs still breed in that district, and Mr. A. Newman informs us that he took eggs at Stanlow Point in 1898.

The Sheld Duck is seldom seen far from the sea, and we have never heard of its being taken inland in Cheshire.

RUDDY SHELD DUCK.

TADORNA CASARCA (Linnæus).

[There is no evidence that the Ruddy Sheld Duck has ever occurred in Cheshire in a wild state. The bird in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, which was caught by a dog near that city in March 1887, had in all probability escaped from captivity.]

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 322.

² H. E. Smith, *op. cit.* p. 242.

MALLARD.

ANAS BOSCAS, Linnæus.

The Mallard, or Wild Duck as it is usually called, is a common resident, breeding in all parts of the county. The nest is often placed amongst brambles or bushes in the vicinity of meres, ponds, or streams, but many pairs breed in coverts at a considerable distance from any water. On the Hills, the eggs are laid under the shelter of the ling on the open moors, as was also the case on Carrington Moss prior to its reclamation. The Rev. C. Wolley-Dod states that at Edge a pair or two generally breed in the trees,¹ and this is doubtless not an uncommon habit of the bird in other localities. When the females are sitting, we have often seen a dozen or more drakes swimming in company on a mere or secluded reservoir. Many newly-hatched young fall victims to the voracity of the pike, which attain an immense size in the larger sheets of water.

In winter the numbers of our resident birds are largely augmented by immigrant Mallards from the Continent, and at this season flocks, often consisting of over a hundred birds, frequent those waters where protection and privacy afford them a sanctuary. These flocks are largest when the meres are partially frozen, for the birds are then driven from the ice-bound ponds to the open waters. Large numbers of Mallards resort to the tidal waters of the estuaries, and Mr. R. Newstead has observed that they are much more plentiful on the Mersey than on the Dee.¹

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 323.

There are no duck-decoys in Cheshire at the present day, but one was worked in the middle of the seventeenth century by Sir William Brereton, the Parliamentary General, at Dodleston, a place close to the then extensive and undrained marshes of the Dee, and therefore admirably suited for the purpose. Sir William appears to have taken great interest in decoys and their working, and constantly refers to those which he saw when travelling in Holland and elsewhere. In describing a visit he made to one, Gabriel Direckson of Delft, in 1634, he says :—‘ His coy is seated near his own and divers other houses and the highways and navigable rivers on both sides, nearer by much than Doddleston Bridge or Findloes House is to my coy. His coy hath five pipes as mine.’¹ These remarks furnish the only clue that exists as to the situation of the decoy, although it is noteworthy that a farm on the road between Dodleston and Chester is still known as the Decoy Farm. It is, however, obviously incorrect to suppose, as the editor of the *Travels* does, that the decoy was at Handforth, Sir William Brereton’s home in East Cheshire; and there appears to be no foundation whatever for Mr. Fletcher Moss’s statements that the site of the decoy is now a calico-printing works at Handforth, and that ‘Shovelers, Teal, Wigeon, Pell-starts (Pintails), Smeathes’ (Smews?) were formerly taken there.² The author of the *Travels* says that these birds were captured at certain Dutch decoys, but from first to last he gives no particulars of the species taken at his own. Apart from his definite

¹ *Travels in Holland, The United Provinces, England, Scotland, and Ireland*, Sir William Brereton, Bart., edited by E. Hawkins, published by the Chetham Society.

² *Zoologist*, ser. III. vol. xix. p. 106. 1895.

statement as to the position of the decoy, it is probable that Sir William Brereton owned some property at Dodleston, as he made the place his headquarters when opposing the King's forces in South Cheshire in 1645.¹

Coward visited the Decoy Farm on October 22nd, 1898. It stands in Lache Lane, about half a mile on the Chester side of Balderton Bridge, and about two miles from Dodleston. A small pond, partially filled with reeds, in a field behind the farm, may be the site of the decoy; but though there are some curious depressions radiating from the pond, they are hardly well enough defined to warrant the supposition that they are remains of the old pipes. Two of these depressions, running from the pond on the south side and gradually tapering, extend for about a hundred and fifty yards into the field, their extremities curving away from each other. The surrounding fields have been extensively drained, and the traces of trenches cut for this purpose are visible all round the pond. Mrs. Morris, the present occupier of the farm, informed Coward that old men in the district could well remember the time when the tide, running over Saltney Marsh, reached the adjoining fields a few hundred yards distant from the farm. Even now, when these fields are flooded in winter, large numbers of Ducks frequently come up from the Dee Estuary. The name 'Decoy Farm' is almost obsolete, and is only used upon official documents.

¹ Hanshall, *History of Cheshire*, p. 38.

GADWALL.

ANAS STREPERA, Linnæus.

The Gadwall seldom occurs in the west of England, and we only know of the existence of one Cheshire example. Captain Congreve has a bird in his collection at Burton, labelled 'March 13th, 1845.'¹ Brockholes' remark, 'Has been shot some years ago on the Dee,'² possibly refers to this specimen.

SHOVELER.

SPATULA CLYPEATA (Linnæus).

The Shoveler is known as a winter visitor to the neighbourhood of Chester and to the Dee Marshes. Brockholes states that in Wirral flocks are occasionally met with on ponds as well as on the Dee Marshes,² and Captain Congreve has a water-colour drawing of a bird obtained at Burton in September 1839. There are three specimens in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, shot by Mr. H. Garland in January 1888, on the Eaton Estate, where Dr. Dobie says the bird is not uncommon in winter.³

In other parts of the county this Duck has not often been observed. A female was shot at Tushingham Hall, near Malpas, on October 14th, 1875;⁴ and in April 1890, Messrs. N. Neave and J. H. Salter saw two Shovelers which had been found on March 31st on the western side of a wall which runs along the summit

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 323.² Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 14.³ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 324.⁴ D. Vawdrey, *Field*, vol. xlv. p. 504. 1875.

of Kerridge, a hill north-east of Macclesfield. The birds were not decomposed, and had evidently met their death a few days before by striking the wall as they were flying in an easterly direction. They were lying within a few feet of one another, and the beaks of both had been crushed and broken by the force of the impact.

PINTAIL.

DAFILA ACUTA (Linnæus).

The Pintail visits the Dee Estuary regularly in the winter, and Dr. Dobie states that it was unusually numerous in January 1891. A specimen in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, was obtained in that month at Burton Rocks, and another in the same collection was shot at Eaton on December 27th, 1890.¹ Brockholes shot an old drake in the winter of 1868-69, as it rose from a freshwater pond near Ness.²

TEAL.

NETTION CRECCA (Linnæus).

During the winter months odd birds of this species are shot occasionally in all parts of the county, and in the Mersey Estuary it is even common.¹ Owing to the reclamation of the marshes and the cultivation of the mosses, suitable nesting-places are now rare, but the bird still breeds at Bagmere, Brookhouse Moss, and elsewhere in the district between Sandbach and Somerford. Teal bred regularly in the Duckwood at Eaton

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 324.

² Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 14.

until 1894,¹ but Mr. R. Newstead tells us that in the spring of 1895, owing to increased drainage, the birds did not remain to nest.

Mr. S. Radcliffe informs us that he has seen eggs taken at Newton in the north-east of the county; and in July some years ago a pair were seen on a pond at Rainow, and one of the birds was shot.

There is no recent record of the Teal nesting in Wirral, but Brockholes obtained eggs from three nests near Leasowe in 1857. The first clutch of nine eggs was taken in the second week of May from a nest on the margin of a 'fender' or moss ditch; it was composed of a great quantity of material and lined with feathers. A second nest with four eggs, found in a neighbouring field on May 26th, was also robbed, and on June 4th four fresh eggs were taken from a third nest in the same locality. As the last two nests appeared to have been hastily constructed, and lacked the lining of feathers, and as only two birds were seen, Brockholes considered that all the eggs were the produce of a single pair, which he believed eventually succeeded in rearing a brood.² In his Wirral list he states that the Teal nests occasionally, but gives no particulars.

GARGANEY.

QUERQUEDULA CIRCIA (Linnæus).

There is a specimen of this rare Duck in the collection of Mr. Kemp at Burton, which he shot in that district. This is possibly the bird mentioned by Brockholes as having been shot in the Dee Estuary.³

¹ Newstead, *Proceedings of the Chester Society of Natural Science and Literature*, part iv. p. 235.

² *Zoologist*, ser. i. vol. xv. p. 5365. 1857. ³ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 324.

WIGEON.

MARECA PENELOPE (Linnæus).

During the winter months great numbers of Wigeon frequent the estuaries of the Dee and Mersey; and although it is less common inland, most of the meres, and even the Longdendale reservoirs, over thirty miles from the nearest salt water in the Mersey Estuary, are visited from time to time by this species.

Brockholes says:—‘I have known two instances of the Wigeon nesting and rearing young at Puddington’; and, ‘on July 20th, 1863, I shot a Wigeon at Puddington, close to where some young ones were reared in the spring.’¹ He informed the late A. G. More of this fact, and added that he had killed a Wigeon at the same spot in August 1862.² Although it was assumed by Mr. More that these birds were wild, in the absence of fuller details it seems to us probable that they were pinioned birds or had escaped from confinement. At any rate, since that date the Wigeon has not been known to nest in Cheshire.

POCHARD.

FULIGULA FERINA (Linnæus).

Comparatively few examples of the Pochard have been obtained in Cheshire, and up to the present time the bird has never been known to breed in the county. Byerley remarks upon its rarity, but says it has been shot on flooded meadows at Hoylake;³ and Brockholes

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 14.

² A. G. More, *Ibis*, ser. II. vol. i. p. 444. 1865.

³ Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 21.

only mentions one example, a male shot in the winter of 1869-70, on a pond at Ness.¹ Dr. Dobie records two others: one killed on the Dee, and one, obtained by Mr. A. J. Nixon at Manley, now in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester.² It is occasionally met with on inland waters. We have seen specimens from Rostherne Mere and Handforth, and it has occurred on Bosley Reservoir. Colonel Dixon informs us that it has been shot on his pool in Astle Park, and Mr. B. R. S. Pemberton that in November 1897 one was shot at Whaley Bridge. On November 27th, 1898, Oldham saw a flock of about a score of Pochards on the mere in Alderley Park.

WHITE-EYED DUCK.

FULIGULA NYROCA (Güldenstädt).

[Two examples of this rare Duck are reported by Byerley to have been obtained in Cheshire: one killed on the Mersey at Weston in January 1854, and the other at Newton-cum-Larton in November 1853.³ It is impossible to verify these records, as unfortunately neither of the birds appears to have been preserved.]

TUFTED DUCK.

FULIGULA CRISTATA (Leach).

Protection has induced the Tufted Duck to remain to breed in many places in England where it was formerly only known as a visitor, and it is remarkable

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 15.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 325.

³ Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 21.

that the bird has not yet been observed in Cheshire during the summer months. Mr. Vere Cholmondeley tells us that a male was shot at Hatton Heath, near Chester, in October 1899. This is an early date for the occurrence of the species, and this bird may possibly have bred somewhere in the district, although the keeper at Hatton says it was not seen at that place before the day it was killed. The meres and pools in the parks furnish unrivalled nesting-places; and as the Tufted Duck has undoubtedly increased in numbers within late years, we may confidently hope that it will soon be established as a resident in the county.

The Tufted Duck has not often been recorded from West Cheshire. Brockholes states that it is occasionally met with on the estuary of the Dee,¹ and Dr. Dobie says that it has occurred at Eaton.² There is an example from that locality in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, which was shot on December 27th, 1890,² and one in the Warrington Museum which was obtained at Appleton. Three are stated to have been shot on the same day on the Mersey near Warrington many years ago.³

The numbers of the Tufted Duck visiting the meres of Mid and East Cheshire have increased considerably within recent years. On January 15th, 1876, Colonel Dixon shot three birds, the first he ever saw in Cheshire, on his pool at Astle Park.⁴ Twenty years later, on March 14th, 1896, we saw about a dozen birds on the pool, and Colonel Dixon informed us that they now frequent the water every winter, often in large numbers, always leaving, however, about the middle of April. During the winter months we have often seen this

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 15.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 325.

³ *Naturalists' Scrap-book*, p. 228.

⁴ *Field*, vol. xlvii. p. 84. 1876.

species on protected waters, such as those at Rostherne and Alderley, where the white sides of the drakes make them conspicuous at a long distance from the shore.

SCAUP.

FULIGULA MARILA (Linnæus).

The Scaup is a winter visitor to the mouths of the Dee and Mersey. Brockholes says it is occasionally shot in the estuary of the Dee,¹ and there is a specimen from that locality in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, which was killed on November 14th, 1888.² Mr. L. Jones has a male and female which he shot at Hilbre Island in February 1895. The late H. Durnford comments on the early appearance of the Scaup in the autumn of 1872, for on September 21st of that year he observed a flock of fifteen or twenty birds at the mouth of the Mersey.³

The Scaup is one of our most maritime ducks, seldom wandering inland, but an example, now in the Warrington Museum, was obtained on Walton Reservoir.²

GOLDEN EYE.

CLANGULA GLAUCION (Linnæus).

The Golden Eye is a regular winter visitor to the Cheshire coast, and it occasionally occurs on inland waters. It is sometimes common on the estuary of the Dee.¹ Byerley remarks that this is especially the

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 15.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 325.

³ *Zoologist*, ser. II. vol. vii. p. 3339. 1872.

case in severe weather.¹ Young birds were formerly abundant on the Mersey above Dingle Point,² and Mr. R. Newstead says they are frequently met with in the neighbourhood of Ince.³

A Golden Eye in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, was shot on the Dee at Eaton on December 4th, 1889; and a female in the same collection was killed by Mr. A. Cookson in December 1893, at Oakmere.³ One in the Warrington Museum was obtained by Mr. Bennet at Walton Reservoir. We have seen a female which was shot on the flooded meadows at Sale in February 1897; and the man who stuffed it assured us that he preserved an adult male about four years previously, which had been obtained in the same locality. On October 31st, 1897, Oldham saw a party of three birds on Bosley Reservoir, and on November 27th, 1898, an adult male in company with a female or an immature bird on the mere in Alderley Park.

LONG-TAILED DUCK.

HARELDA GLACIALIS (Linnæus).

The Long-tailed Duck is not often met with on the west coast of England, and only a few examples have been recorded from the Cheshire shore. Brockholes states that it has been killed on the estuary of the Dee,⁴ and there is a specimen in Captain Congreve's collection at Burton, dated December 1839. A female in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, was shot at Burton on December 2nd, 1886.⁵

¹ Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 21.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 325.

³ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 326.

⁴ *Naturalists' Scrap-book*, p. 228.

⁵ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 15.

HARLEQUIN DUCK.

COSMONETTA HISTRIONICA (Linnæus).

[Most of the alleged instances of the occurrence of the Harlequin Duck in Britain have proved to be spurious, and Yarrell's record of one shot at Oulton¹ is open to the gravest doubt. In his critical account of this species as a British bird, Mr. J. H. Gurney, jun., says:—'I have very little doubt that Mr. Yarrell was mistaken when he adds that the keeper at Sir Philip Egerton's shot a female in Cheshire in 1840. Great author as he was, he did not know what a rare bird the Harlequin was. At this distance of time I cannot attempt to disprove it, but the following are a few additional details with which Sir Philip has favoured me. He writes that he believes the under parts were not dark, which they ought to have been, that it was a bird of the year, and that it was never preserved. Its occurrence was only communicated to Mr. Yarrell on the authority of Professor Agassiz, who chanced to be staying at his seat at Oulton Park.'²]

EIDER DUCK.

SOMATERIA MOLLISSIMA (Linnæus).

To our western shores the Eider Duck is but an occasional wanderer, and there is only a single known instance of its occurrence in Cheshire. On December 7th, 1894, an adult female in an exhausted condition

¹ Yarrell, *History of British Birds*, 3rd edit. vol. iii. p. 366.

² *Rambles of a Naturalist*, p. 267.

was captured by a dog at Newball, near Saighton, on the Eaton Estate. It was kept alive for two or three days, but refused food, and was subsequently presented to the Grosvenor Museum, Chester.

COMMON SCOTER.

ÆDEmia NIGRA (Linnæus).

During the winter months the Common Scoter occurs in considerable numbers in the Dee and Mersey Estuaries. Byerley says it is 'very abundant about the sandbanks,'¹ and Brockholes describes it as 'an abundant Duck at sea off the north of Wirral,' adding that 'it occasionally comes to the Leasowe shore, and is sometimes storm-driven to land.'² Mr. R. Newstead has seen this species off Stanlow Point, but says it is not very common in the Mersey Estuary.³ The shallow waters near Hilbre Island are favourite feeding-grounds, and birds are often obtained by sportsmen in that locality. Mr. L. Jones has one which was captured alive at Hilbre during the severe frost in February 1894.

We have seen specimens of the Velvet Scoter, *Ædemia fusca* (Linnæus), which had been shot at Formby; and Mr. H. Saunders says that a pair or two of this species are found in company with nearly every flock of Common Scoters near Southport.⁴ It is almost certain that this is also the case on the Cheshire coast, where a little vigilance on the part of local ornithologists would probably result in the addition of the Velvet Scoter to the county avifauna.

¹ Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 21.

² Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 15.

³ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 326.

⁴ *Handbook of British Birds*, 2nd edit. p. 467.

GOOSANDER.

MERGUS MERGANSER, Linnæus.

Brockholes says that the Goosander 'occasionally occurs on the estuary of the Dee and on the Dee Marshes,'¹ and Byerley makes a similar statement about the Liverpool district.² These remarks, of course, apply only to the winter months.

There are two specimens in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, from the river Dee: one shot by Mr. T. H. Hignett from a party of four birds, half a mile below Saltney Ferry, on January 9th, 1894; and one killed at Eaton on December 4th, 1889.³ It is somewhat remarkable that the Goosander is not met with more frequently on the Cheshire meres; the only examples we have seen are one in the collection of Mr. J. E. Newton at Denfield Hall, which was killed on Rostherne Mere in the first half of the present century, and one in Mr. R. Nunnerley's collection, from the pool at North Rode.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER.

MERGUS SERRATOR, Linnæus.

The Red-breasted Merganser is a rare winter visitor to the Cheshire coast, and Brockholes does not seem to have observed it on the Wirral seaboard. Byerley gives no definite instance of its occurrence, but states on the authority of Mather, a Liverpool taxidermist, that

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 15.

² Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 21.

³ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 326.

the bird has been 'taken rarely in severe winters.'¹ A male and female in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, were obtained at Burton Rocks in 1885.

SMEW.

MERGUS ALBELLUS, Linnæus.

In severe winters the Smew has been occasionally observed upon the Cheshire coast. Byerley mentions the occurrence of two examples on the Mersey: one shot at Weston by Mr. Banks in January 1854, and another which was taken at Tranmere.² In January 1861, examples obtained on the Dee near Chester were sent to Shaw of Shrewsbury for preservation.³ Captain Congreve has a bird in his collection which was shot at Burton on January 22nd, 1838.⁴ In 1891, several Smews frequented the tidal waters of the Dee, about which the following notes were supplied to Dr. Dobie by Mr. R. Newstead:—'During the severe weather of January 1891, seven of this very beautiful species were seen on several occasions in the river Dee, in the neighbourhood of Saltney Ferry. Three of them, two males and a female, were shot by Mr. T. H. Hignett on the 14th, and were presented to the Museum. Subsequently Mr. Hignett shot another male; this, unfortunately, dropped on the floating ice, and was probably carried out to sea.

'On the 18th, I was fortunate in seeing two males swimming near the Chester side of the river, a little below the Saltney Ferry. The birds saw me

¹ Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 21.

² *Ibid.*

³ J. Shaw, *Zoologist*, ser. i. vol. xix. p. 7388. 1861.

⁴ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 327.

immediately I approached the river bank, and got as near the opposite side as they thought safe, and there remained for twenty minutes, giving me a splendid opportunity of watching their habits. Both birds were in adult plumage; but from the size of its crest, and cautious manners, one was evidently an old bird; this fellow acted as sentinel while the other continually dived. Eventually the birds took wing, apparently rising with little difficulty; at first they flew towards the city, but gradually wheeled round towards me, flying straight down the centre of the river.

‘When swimming the neck is much arched, and the bill scarcely extends beyond the breast. During the whole of the time that I watched them the crest was carried semi-erect, and at all times the beautiful greenish-black feathers were conspicuous. The black wing-feathers were hidden by the marginal breast-feathers, which gave the birds a much whiter appearance than I anticipated. The birds uttered no note as they rose from the water; their flight, too, was very silent.

‘They had evidently resorted to our river for the sake of the Flukes (*Platessa flesus*, Fleming) which abound, as I found ten of these fish and a Salmonn Fy in the gullet of the male which was shot by Mr. Hignett.’¹

In the severe weather of February 1895, several Smews were observed in the Mersey Estuary, near Ince. An adult male, now in the collection of Mr. R. Newstead, sen., was obtained on the second of the month.

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 327.

ORDER COLUMBÆ.

FAMILY COLUMBIDÆ.

RING DOVE.

COLUMBA PALUMBUS, Linnæus.

Wood Pigeon, Queeze, Cushat.

Throughout the whole of the county the Ring Dove is a well-known resident, and has undoubtedly increased in numbers within recent years. Naturally, it is most abundant in the woodlands of Wirral and the Plain, but large numbers breed in the plantations and fir-woods of the hilly districts of the East. Flocks of migratory birds visit the county in the winter months, sometimes in considerable numbers. In Cheshire, as in other parts of the country, the winter of 1893-94 was memorable for the hordes of Ring Doves which invaded the fields and woodlands. In the course of a morning walk on the 10th of December 1893, in the neighbourhood of Northenden and Baguley, we saw six large flocks, the smallest of which must have numbered two hundred, and the largest over six hundred birds. Besides these large gatherings there were many smaller parties here and there in the fields. Mr. R. Newstead and the Rev. C. Wolley-Dod, who observed a similar influx of migrants at Eaton and Edge, both commented upon the unusual abundance of acorns in that season.¹

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 327.

The Ring Dove is a voracious feeder, and when present in large numbers does considerable damage to the crops of the agriculturist and market-gardener. We have seen birds that had been shot, whose crops, distended with turnip-tops and Brussels-sprouts, had burst through the impact of the fall. Some idea of the amount of food consumed by this species may be conveyed by the fact that at Ashton Hayes sixty-nine acorns of medium size were taken from the crop of a single bird.¹ The market-gardener may well regard the Ring Dove with disfavour; we have seen birds shot in July on the extensive strawberry-fields in North Cheshire, whose crops were crammed with the ripe juicy fruit. Mr. J. J. Cash has noticed that these birds are partial to the young leaves of the ash, upon which he has observed them feeding in the tops of the trees, on several occasions in spring.

Apart from the necessity of keeping down the numbers of this destructive bird, the Ring Dove is much sought after on account of its value as an article of food. The absence of fear, born of security, exhibited by the fat, well-favoured birds in the London parks, contrasts strongly with the wariness which is such a marked characteristic of this species in an agricultural county. In winters when the birds are numerous, the farmer builds a screen of boughs round a tree-trunk close to some favourite feeding-ground. From this shelter he is able to shoot the birds, which it would be almost impossible to approach in the open.

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 328.

STOCK DOVE.

COLUMBA ŒNAS, Linnæus.

Blue-rock, Sand Pigeon, Hill Pigeon.

The growing popularity of such places as West Kirby and Hoylake, and the conversion of sand-dunes into golf-links, have destroyed many of the stations on the Wirral coast where the Stock Dove was at one time a common resident. It still, however, nests in rabbit-burrows and holes in the marl-cliffs in several localities. There can be little doubt that the bird was formerly well known as a breeding species on the New Brighton and Wallasey sandhills, as it certainly was in the neighbourhood of Hoylake and Meols and along the Dee shore from Hilbre Point to Neston.¹ Brockholes, quoting Mr. R. Barton, says that on Caldy Hill the Stock Dove sometimes nests on the ground beneath gorse-bushes as well as in rabbit-holes.² In this locality it was known as the 'Hill Pigeon,' whereas at Meols it was always called the 'Sand Pigeon.'¹ Elsewhere in Wirral it is reported from Burton—where it is fairly common, breeding in trees—and from the neighbourhood of Backford and Moston.³

We have no record of the Stock Dove from the Hills in the east and north-east, and even throughout the Plain it is local, being decidedly scarce except in a few districts. It occurs at Eaton, and the Rev. C. Wolley-Dod says it is very common at Edge, where it breeds in old timber.³ In those parks where the bird is found, the nest is usually built in a hollow tree

¹ H. E. Smith, *op. cit.* p. 248.

² Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 10.

³ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 328.

or in the dense growth of twigs so often found on the trunks of old limes. We have met with the Stock Dove in both the parks at Dunham Massey, at Great Budworth, and Higher Peover. Mr. F. S. Graves found a nest in a hollow oak on Alderley Edge about the year 1894; and Mr. F. Brownsword has taken eggs from the limes in the park at Mottram St. Andrew, where he says the bird is not uncommon.

The alleged occurrences of the Rock Dove (*Columba livia*, J. F. Gmelin) in Cheshire are undoubtedly erroneous. It must be borne in mind that the name 'Rock Dove' is often applied to *Columba ænas*, and that the Cheshire coast is utterly unsuited to the habits of *C. livia*. There can be no doubt that the birds which nested in a rabbit-hole on Middle Hilbre, and were recorded as Rock Doves by Mr. H. E. Smith, were really Stock Doves,¹ as were the birds which 'frequented the high portions of the river-bank between Eastham Ferry and Hooton,'² unless they were feral dovecot Pigeons.

TURTLE DOVE.

TURTUR COMMUNIS, Selby.

At the present time, when so many interesting species are becoming rarer year by year, it is gratifying to find that the Turtle Dove is steadily increasing in numbers in Cheshire. Fifty years ago the bird was practically unknown in the county; now it is a regular summer visitor to Wirral and the Plain, and is even plentiful in South Cheshire.

¹ H. E. Smith, *op. cit.* p. 248.

² Brockholes, *Proc. of the Liverpool Lit. and Phil. Society*, vol. xv. p. 26. 1860-61.

The earliest record of this species relates to a bird that was shot at Bidston-cum-Ford in 1851.¹ In the summer of 1863, a pair were observed near the beach at New Brighton.² Two years later, Mr. J. H. Donald noted that a pair had taken up their quarters in Arley Park, near Northwich,³ and his inquiry whether the species had ever been observed in Cheshire elicited several replies. The Rev. W. D. Fox stated that four or five years previously a pair were seen about the Old Pale Farm in Delamere Forest, one of which was shot, and that later in the season another was killed in Oulton Park.⁴ Mr. John Price reported the presence of Turtle Doves in the breeding season at Kinnerton, near Chester, and said that he had frequently seen them between Chester and Birkenhead.⁵ Brockholes also replied to the effect that a few pairs visited Puddington, Burton, and Ness every year;⁴ and in his Wirral list, published nine years later, he described the Turtle Dove as a common summer visitor to the same neighbourhood.⁶

Dr. Dobie remarks upon the increase of the Turtle Dove in recent years in the Chester district, and states that it is frequently seen on the Dee Cop. He mentions Backford, Eaton, and Saughton as places where it has bred, and he possesses eggs which were taken in the last-named locality more than twenty-five years ago. It has also been observed at Ince.⁷

The Rev. C. Wolley-Dod states that the bird is very common at Edge, having become so during the last quarter of a century; and Lord Combermere makes a

¹ Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 17.

² H. E. Smith, *op. cit.* p. 239.

³ *Field*, vol. xxvi. p. 43. 1865.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 69.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 254.

⁶ Brockholes, *Proc. of Chester Soc. of Nat. Sci. and Lit.*, part i. p. 10.

⁷ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 329.

similar statement with regard to Combermere.¹ Personally, we have found the Turtle Dove more plentiful in that district than anywhere else in Cheshire; in August, a few years since, we frequently saw parties of four or five birds feeding in the fields in the neighbourhood of Bar Mere and Quoisley Mere. Mr. J. Platt has eggs in his collection which were taken near Shavington-cum-Gresty.

The Turtle Dove has not yet been observed on the hills of East Cheshire, but in the Plain it is steadily increasing. There is a specimen in the Warrington Museum from Preston Brook. We have found nests in thorn-trees in Higher Peover Park, and the bird is plentiful in the neighbourhood of Somerford. Mr. H. H. Corbett found a nest in a holly-tree at Alderley Edge about the year 1870, and in 1896 Colonel Dixon showed us birds in his aviary which had been captured at Astle the previous summer. In the valleys of the Mersey and Bollin the bird is now well established. In 1893 three examples were shot in Ashton-on-Mersey, and since that date we have both seen young birds and found nests there and in the adjoining parish of Partington. In the same year one was shot at Timperley; and the keeper in Dunham Park, who had never seen Turtle Doves in the district before, reported to us that a pair had nested in the Headsman's Covert, and that he frequently saw the birds feeding on the corn strewn for the Pheasants. He shot one of the old birds, which is now in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester. Mr. J. J. Cash informs us that he frequently heard a Turtle Dove purring in a covert near Knob Hall, Baguley, in 1896; and in 1898 and 1899 Coward several times saw birds in a wood at Ashley.

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 329.

ORDER PTEROCLETES.

FAMILY PTEROCLIDÆ.

PALLAS'S SAND GROUSE.

SYRRHAPTES PARADOXUS (Pallas).

On two of the occasions—the irruptions of 1863-64 and 1888-89—when hordes of this Asiatic species travelled westward and overran Europe, a few examples reached Cheshire. The congenial conditions afforded by the sandhills of the Wirral coast appear to have attracted the birds, inducing them to linger for some time in that neighbourhood, but none were noticed in the central or eastern portions of the county.

On May 29th or 30th, 1863, two Sand Grouse were observed at Hoylake, and on the 2nd of June a male was shot there, which was secured for the Liverpool Museum.¹ The late C. S. Gregson states, on the authority of Mr. John Price, that birds were seen at Upton near Chester.² The Sand Grouse seem to have remained among the Wirral sandhills for some months, for early in November another male was shot near Leasowe Castle by Mr. Simpkins of Birkenhead.³ On the 28th of the same month one was killed about four miles east of Warrington.⁴ Possibly this is the bird which Gregson states was shot near Warrington on Christmas Day.²

¹ T. J. Moore, *Naturalists' Scrap-book*, p. 70; cf. Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 10, and Prof. Newton, *Ibis*, ser. i. vol. vi. p. 210. 1864.

² H. E. Smith, *op. cit.* p. 239.

³ T. J. Moore, *Zoologist*, ser. i. vol. xxii. p. 8889. 1864.

⁴ J. Cooper, *Zoologist*, ser. i. vol. xxii. p. 8958. 1864.

With regard to the occurrence of the Sand Grouse in the county during the invasion of 1888-89, Mr. T. Comber of Parkgate has furnished us with the following particulars:—‘A large colony established itself at Storeton on land belonging to Mr. Brocklebank, who allowed his keeper to shoot several specimens for friends. Plenty were, however, left to breed, and it was hoped that they would do so, but this was not realised. It was probably an outlying lot of this colony which was watched several times on the few sandhills below Heswall Church. On one occasion a flight of five or six flew over my tennis-court at Parkgate, and we at once spotted them as strangers, but it was not until afterwards that I discovered what they were.’ An adult female in the Liverpool Museum was shot at Storeton on June 1st, and Mr. G. Sherewood has two others captured in the same locality.¹

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 329.

ORDER GALLINÆ.

FAMILY TETRAONIDÆ.

BLACK GROUSE.

TETRAO TETRIX, Linnæus.

The breeding area of the Black Grouse in Cheshire is now restricted to the Hill Country of the East. The bird is absent from the treeless moorlands of Upper Longdendale, but is found sparingly in the plantations and wooded cloughs of the district lying between the Goyt and Dane to the east of Macclesfield. A few birds nest at Lyme and Bakestonedale Moor. Black Grouse are fairly plentiful in the woods of the Goyt Valley from Whaley Bridge to Goyts Moss, as well as in the wooded cloughs between Sutton and Bosley, and in the Dane Valley from the latter place to Wincle.

Although now extinct on the Cheshire Plain, the Black Grouse used to breed on the wooded heaths, most of which have been brought under cultivation. Mr. J. C. Stivens informed Dr. Dobie that so recently as the sixties he used to get four or five brace in a day's shooting in Delamere Forest;¹ whilst in the early part of the century the bird was fairly plentiful at Rudheath, where it was often shot at roost on moonlight nights or by the light of torches.² It was also found at Roe Park, some three miles south of Congleton.²

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 329.

² T. W. Barlow, MS.

Black Game have occasionally been obtained in places far removed from their usual haunts. Byerley states that the bird has been shot on Kirby Moss;¹ and a Grey-hen, now in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, was killed on November 21st, 1892, by Mr. L. Ledsham, jun., in his garden at Boughton, near Chester.² Mr. T. Worthington informs us that a Grey-hen was shot at Wythenshawe, near Northenden, some time in the seventies.

RED GROUSE.

LAGOPUS SCOTICUS (Latham).

Thousands of acres on the hills in the east of Cheshire are devoted to the preservation of the Red Grouse, and on many of the moors large bags are obtained. From the hills of Lyme southward to Bosley Minn, and east to the Derbyshire border, the bird abounds wherever the moorlands are uncultivated. In the upper part of the Goyt Valley and elsewhere in Macclesfield Forest, the hillsides for many miles are clothed with ling, heather, bilberry, and cranberry; cotton grass flourishes in the marshy spots; and on the highest ridges the cloudberry occurs in patches—furnishing ideal conditions for this species. In the north-east, where the hills along the Yorkshire border attain a height of nearly two thousand feet, the whole country above the rough hill-pastures, from Staleybridge to Woodhead, is one continuous grouse-moor. Although in spring and summer bird-life is plentiful, the Red Grouse is the only species that inhabits these moorlands throughout the year; and except in the worst weather, it may be

¹ Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 17.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 329.

met with in the bleakest and most exposed situations. An exceptionally heavy fall of snow, or a blizzard sweeping across the summits, will, however, cause the birds to seek a temporary refuge in the valleys. On December 26th, 1895, we crossed the moors from Greenfield to Crowden in the teeth of a gale which drove the frozen particles of snow into our faces with such violence that we could hardly stand upright. Whilst ascending, we met the Red Grouse flying down wind in hundreds to find shelter in the valleys on the Yorkshire side, and when we reached the watershed not a bird was to be seen.

At one time the Red Grouse was probably abundant on most of the mosses of the Plain; and until its purchase by the Manchester Corporation in 1886, Carrington Moss was a well-stocked grouse-moor. As the Moss was brought under cultivation the birds rapidly decreased in numbers, and finally disappeared in 1894. On the 25th of July in that year, Oldham flushed five birds from a field of cabbages in which they had sought cover, the last patch of heather having been broken up a day or two previously. Ten years before, numbers of Red Grouse might be seen in autumn feeding on and among the shocks of corn in fields surrounding the Moss.

The Red Grouse has occasionally wandered to Wirral. Byerley mentions one which was shot at West Kirby, and a pair at Cloughton Firwood.¹

¹ Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 17.

FAMILY PHASIANIDÆ.

PHEASANT.

PHASIANUS COLCHICUS (Linnæus).

PHASIANUS TORQUATUS, Gmelin.

Except in Upper Longdendale and in those parts of the hills east of Macclesfield where there is no suitable cover, the Pheasant is extensively preserved and exists everywhere in a semi-domesticated condition. Hand-reared birds are turned down in thousands in woods and coverts which are maintained and often planted solely for their benefit. Everything is done to destroy their natural enemies, and from first to last theirs is an artificial existence. To a naturalist, perhaps the Pheasant is most interesting as a factor in the economy of other creatures; for whereas those which are, or are considered to be, inimical to its interests are rigorously persecuted, others benefit equally with the Pheasant by the destruction of predatory creatures, and obtain the food and seclusion they require in the strictly preserved coverts.

In recent years the increase of the Ring-necked species (*P. torquatus*) has become increasingly apparent, and the true *P. colchicus* is practically extinct. All the birds one sees are either pure-bred *P. torquatus* or are influenced to a great extent by its interbreeding with the older form.

Colonel Dixon has in his collection at Astle a dark-coloured bird, a hybrid between a Pheasant and a Black Spanish Fowl; and in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, there is another curious hybrid that was shot at Eaton on January 12th, 1897. It is the offspring of a male Plymouth Rock Fowl and a female Pheasant.

COMMON PARTRIDGE.

PERDIX CINEREA, Latham.

Owing to the protection afforded to it, the Partridge is abundant throughout the lowlands of Cheshire, and occurs in some numbers in the Hill Country. In the neighbourhood of Winele, and possibly in other districts, it is not so plentiful as it was when, owing to the high price obtainable for British wheat, more of the land was under corn.

Latham describes a chestnut variety of this species as the 'Cheshire Partridge' in the following words:— 'This bird is somewhat larger than our Common Partridge. The bill black, head and neck, to the breast, brownish buff-colour; the ear feathers and wing coverts tawny brown, each feather whitish down the shaft, and continued as a large mottled white mark, occupying the whole end of the feather; under parts of the body from the breast, chestnut brown; quills mixture of white on the upper part of the body and wing coverts, and some few mottlings of buff on the breast, beyond this chestnut brown, as in the other, with a little mixture of white; the thighs in both pale ash colour. The above two, most elegant birds, were shot in Cheshire, and were in Mr. Bullock's Museum. Whether they belong to the Common Partridge, as a variety, we are unable to determine: as far as the head and neck, they coincide greatly with the mountain species, but not in any other circumstances, as the latter bird is uniform in its colours, having no markings of white on any part of the body.'¹

¹ *General History of Birds*, vol. viii. p. 286. Cf. W. R. Ogilvie-Grant, *Field*, vol. lxxix. p. 508. 1892.

The Red-legged Partridge, *Caccabis rufa* (Linnæus), is occasionally reared from introduced eggs, but has never succeeded in establishing itself in Cheshire, and the birds which are shot from time to time have no claim to a place in a local avifauna.

QUAIL.

COTURNIX COMMUNIS, Bonnaterre.

But-for-But.

The Quail, an occasional summer visitor to Cheshire, has only been noticed at irregular intervals, and in most years is entirely absent. In the summer of 1870, when this species was plentiful in many parts of England, it was several times observed in Cheshire. A nest with eggs was taken on Mr. Leather's farm at Delamere,¹ and the Rev. C. Wolley-Dod heard the call-note of the bird in August in a field of wheat near Malpas.² Brockholes, whose Wirral list was published in 1874, describes the Quail as 'a scarce summer visitor to Leasowe, Bidston, Rock Ferry, Bebington, Ness, and Burton.'³ His remarks probably refer to the invasion of 1870, as does Mr. J. E. Smith's record of a bird at Timperley.⁴ Dr. Dobie says, on the authority of Mr. T. H. Hignett, that some years ago Quail were frequently killed on Sealand.⁵

On September 7th, 1882, Mr. S. H. Woodhouse flushed three Quails at Kingsley, near Frodsham, and

¹ Rev. W. D. Fox, *Field*, vol. xxxvii. p. 20. 1871.

² *Field*, vol. xxxvii. p. 38.

³ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 10.

⁴ *Manchester City News*, May 16, 1874.

⁵ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 330.

he states that six were killed at Oulton a few years previously.¹

The year 1893 was remarkable for the influx of Quails, and birds nested in many places in the Cheshire lowlands. Dr. Dobie says they were frequently heard in fields adjoining the Dee Cop, and were reported from Saughall and Aldford.² In September, Mr. Delves L. Broughton came across a bevy, out of which four young birds were shot, at Doddington;³ and in the same month Mr. R. Nunnerley shot two birds out of a bevy of three on Mossley Moss, Congleton. In the autumn of this year Colonel Dixon obtained a Quail at Withington, and informs us that others were seen in that neighbourhood. In the valley of the Mersey the bird was particularly abundant. During May and June, Mr. J. J. Cash repeatedly heard birds calling at Northenden, Baguley, and Ringway, and in the water-meadows near Sale. Speaking of a visit to the last locality on June 11th, he says:—‘In the river-meadows this evening a considerable number of Quails called simultaneously; so many, indeed, that I would have found it difficult to distinguish the individual notes. No one passing along the river-bank could fail to be struck by the incessant and curious call-notes of the bird to-night.’ He adds that he obtained satisfactory evidence of the occurrence of the Quail during the summer at Ashley, Bramhall, Tabley, and Delamere. On May 24th, a farm-servant, who with Mr. Cash was listening to a bird calling in a field near Northenden, said that one summer about twenty years before, the ‘But-for-Buts’ frequented that field, but that he had seen none since. This would

¹ *Field*, vol. lx. p. 407. 1882.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 330.

³ *Field*, vol. lxxxii. p. 491. 1893.

probably be in 1870, and Mr. Cash learned from other sources that Quails had been heard in Northen Etchells and Baguley about that date. Mr. C. J. Edmondson has in his collection broken egg-shells, which he obtained in 1893 from a nest at Deanwater, near Handforth, after the young had been hatched.

ORDER GRALLÆ.

SUB-ORDER FULICARIÆ. FAMILY RALLIDÆ.

LAND RAIL.

CREX PRATENSIS, Bechstein.

Corncrake, Grass Quail, Quail, Dakerhen.

During the last week of April or the first few days of May, the familiar call of this summer visitor may be heard in the Cheshire lowlands and in the hill-pastures up to the edge of the moors. In 1892 a female was picked up under the telegraph wires at Helsby on April 7th, an unusually early date.¹

The Land Rail is seldom seen, owing to its skulking habits, but during May and June and until the middle of July its presence everywhere is advertised day and night by its monotonous and incessant 'crake.' The majority of the birds leave us in September, but we have known individuals that have been wounded, or from some other reason have been unable to migrate, to live through the winter.

Mr. J. J. Cash has timed the call of this bird, and found that the dissyllabic note is uttered sixty times per minute.

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 331.

SPOTTED CRAKE.

PORZANA MARUETTA (Leach).

The majority of the Spotted Crakes recorded from Cheshire have been obtained during the autumn migration. In the breeding season the bird is apt to be overlooked owing to its retiring habits, but it is probable that it occasionally nests in the reed-beds of the meres and other suitable situations. There is a specimen in the Warrington Museum which was obtained near that town in June 1892, and we know of an instance of the bird nesting just beyond the Lancashire border. Mr. F. Nicholson informs us that some years ago some newly hatched young were seen, and one was captured on swampy ground at the confluence of the Mersey and Irwell.

Byerley says that three Spotted Crakes were shot at Hoylake in 1852, and adds that the bird has been observed at Kirby Moss.¹ Brockholes mentions one that was picked up beneath the telegraph wires near Ness,² and on August 26th, 1890, another was found under similar circumstances in the same neighbourhood.³ Two specimens in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, were obtained in October 1888: one in a turnip field at Great Sutton, and the other at Upton Nurseries, near Chester.⁴ Dr. Dobie records one from Hoole on September 11th, 1889, and states that others have occurred at Burton, Aldford, and the marshy districts of Thornton-le-Moors, Ince, and Helsby.⁵ Mr. H. H. Corbett tells us that one was shot at Handforth some

¹ Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 19.

² Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 13.

³ E. Comber, *Zoologist*, ser. III. vol. xiv. p. 390. 1890.

⁴ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 331.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 332.

years ago; and Colonel Dixon obtained one at Astle in 1868.

On October 3rd, 1891, a Spotted Crake was picked up by Mr. H. S. Claye beneath the telephone wires on Bosley Cloud, and was erroneously recorded at the time as a Little Crake, *Porzana parva* (Scopoli).¹

WATER RAIL.

RALLUS AQUATICUS, Linnæus.

The Water Rail is a not uncommon visitor to the lowlands of the county; and though, naturally, rarer in the Hills, it has even been obtained in the upper part of Longdendale, where one was shot high up on the moors at Woodhead in the autumn of 1894. A few pairs probably nest with us; Mr. F. S. Graves assures us that he has seen the bird in the breeding season at Redes Mere, and the late T. W. Barlow stated that Water Rails were to be met with in the neighbourhood of Holmes Chapel throughout the year.²

Although it usually keeps well out of sight, the Water Rail when surprised in the open will sometimes trust for protection to its resemblance to surrounding objects. On November 19th, 1887, Coward saw one running near the margin of Rostherne Mere. When he was still a long way off it mounted on a bare tree-stump, and squatting on the top held its head horizontally, so that the beak appeared to be a twig projecting from the trunk. It allowed him to approach within two or three feet, and then ran to the water and swam to a reed-bed. In March 1893 he saw

¹ *Field*, vol. lxxviii. p. 582. 1891.

² *Zoologist*, ser. I. vol. iii. p. 1025. 1845.

another, near Agden, which ran into some brambles and reeds and there remained motionless, its red bill and barred plumage harmonising wonderfully with its surroundings.

MOORHEN.

GALLINULA CHLOROPUS (Linnæus).

Waterhen, Coot.

The marl-pits of Wirral and the Plain are the chief resorts of this abundant resident, and there are very few of these ponds in which one or more pairs do not nest. The reed-beds and the undergrowth on the margins of the meres are also favourite nesting-places, and many pairs rear their young on rivers and streams, even in the Hill Country. In winter, when the ponds are frozen, the Moorhen resorts to running water, and at that season hunger often drives the bird to seek its food in the farmyard amongst the fowls.

The nest of the Moorhen is usually placed on the ground, among sedges or in a low bush, but occasionally it is built in a tree. We have seen one in a fir eleven feet above the ground, and Mr. J. J. Cash tells us that he once found one built upon the disused nest of a Ring Dove. At Astle, in 1874, a Moorhen built in a spruce, eighteen feet above the ground, and after laying four eggs was evicted by a Pheasant, which added eight eggs of her own. These were removed, but the Pheasant continued to incubate the Moorhen's eggs.¹

If suddenly surprised on a large sheet of water, the Moorhen usually takes wing, flying along the surface

¹ *Field*, vol. xxxvii. p. 443. 1871.

and striking the water with its dependent legs; but in the confined area of a marl-pit it often submerges itself until only the beak is left above water, and remains quiescent until the danger is over. This power of submergence is acquired at a very early age, and we have seen black downy chicks, only a few days old, leave the nest on which they were resting and sink quietly beneath the surface.

COOT.

FULICA ATRA, Linnæus.

Bald Coot.

Unlike the Moorhen, the Coot does not nest in the marl-pits, being confined to the meres and larger pools, where it is locally abundant. In Wirral the bird appears to be very rare in the breeding season. Brockholes only knew it as a winter visitor,¹ but Mr. W. E. Sharp informed Dr. Dobie that a pair or two visit the pits near Ledsham every year, but are always killed or driven away.² The Coot breeds in some numbers on all the meres of the Plain, being particularly abundant on those waters where there are extensive reed-beds. On approaching any of these meres one is struck by the number of the black birds that dot the surface, for the Coot is more in evidence than any other species. The sharp metallic call is uttered both by day and by night, and the birds are especially noisy during the breeding season. The lack of cover is sufficient reason for its absence from the reservoirs among the Hills, but it nests regularly at Lyme, Adlington, Poynton,

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 13.² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 332.

and Bosley Reservoir, on the eastern confines of the Plain.

In severe winters the Coot is common in the Dee Estuary, and probably frequents the tidal waters of the Mersey, although Mr. R. Newstead, senior, has only once seen it at Ince.¹ When the meres are ice-bound, however, many of the birds still remain in their immediate vicinity. In 1886, when Rostherne Mere was completely frozen so late as the middle of March, Coward saw the Coots, disturbed by the skaters, rise repeatedly from the reed-beds and wheel overhead in compact flocks. Again, at Tatton in January 1891, he saw the birds feeding on the grass in large numbers, some hundreds of yards away from the mere which was covered with skaters.

The nest of the Coot, which, if circumstances permit, is built in a reed-bed, seldom rises more than a few inches above the water-line, but in case of a flood the bird makes considerable additions to the structure. In June 1886 we found several nests at Rostherne which were supported on bulky foundations of reeds and stood two to three feet above the level of the mere, whose waters had receded at the termination of a long spell of wet weather.

When lying on the dead reeds spotted with black fungoid growth, the stone-grey eggs minutely speckled with black are peculiarly adapted to their environment, being almost invisible. The significance of this coloration is very apparent when the eggs are deposited under unusual conditions. At Bosley Reservoir, where there are no reeds, we have seen nests constructed of black water-stained sticks and roots built amongst the osiers, in which the eggs were very conspicuous. On

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 332.

some of the Anglesea lakes, where a large species of *Scirpus* takes the place of reeds, and is used by the Coots in the construction of their nests, the eggs gain no protection whatever from their colour. They are in strong contrast with the green of the nests, which the rushes themselves are neither high nor dense enough to conceal.

ORDER LIMICOLÆ.

FAMILY CEDICNEMIDÆ.

STONE CURLEW.

CEDICNEMUS SCOLOPAX (S. G. Gmelin).

The Stone Curlew is a very rare visitor to the north-west of England, and has only once been obtained in Cheshire. A specimen in the Warrington Museum, labelled 'Hoole, Chester,' was purchased by Mr. F. Nicholson from a Chester birdstuffer.¹ Mr. Nicholson informs us that he saw this bird in the flesh, and was perfectly satisfied that the record was genuine. Byerley's remark that the bird is 'said to have been seen on the Hoylake shore' is too vague to be of any value.²

FAMILY CHARADRIIDÆ.

DOTTEREL.

EUDROMIAS MORINELLUS (Linnæus).

The Dotterel is only known in Cheshire as a passing migrant in spring. There has probably been a considerable decrease in its numbers during the last fifty years, but small trips are still seen almost every year in May and June by the gamekeepers on the moors in the neighbourhood of Crowden and Woodhead. In

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 332.

² Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 17.

1874, Mr. J. E. Smith described the bird as a regular spring visitor to Hale Moss,¹ a tract of boggy land close to Altrincham, which has since been reclaimed. Brockholes, writing in the same year, said that Dotterel had been shot a few years previously on the shore at Denhall, but that the bird was scarce in Wirral.² Dr. Dobie mentions one that was shot near Frodsham on May 2nd, 1887.³

RINGED PLOVER.

ÆGIALITIS HIATICOLA (Linnæus).

Tullet, Sand Lark.

The Ringed Plover may be met with on the Wirral coast at all seasons of the year, although very few, if any, now breed in Cheshire. So long ago as 1865, Mr. H. E. Smith said that this species, owing to molestation, had ceased to nest in its old haunts on the Cheshire shore;⁴ but Mr. W. E. Sharp found it breeding on Middle Hilbre in 1876.⁵ There is a large influx of migratory birds from the south in spring. On May 14th, 1894, we came across thousands of Ringed Plovers scattered over the saltings between Burton and Shotwick. The birds, which were associated with Dunlins, were probably referable to the small dark form, and were moving northwards to their breeding-grounds. Mr. L. Jones has two examples in his possession which he shot at Hilbre, one being of this form, and the other of the larger resident race.

The Ringed Plover is met with along the Mersey up

¹ *Manchester City News*, May 16, 1874.

² Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 10.

⁴ Smith, *op. cit.* p. 249.

³ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 333.

⁵ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 333.

to Warrington, but it seldom occurs inland. We have, however, seen an example which was shot at Poynton Pool; and on August 7th, 1899, Oldham saw one at Redes Mere.

GOLDEN PLOVER.

CHARADRIUS PLUVIALIS, Linnæus.

Sheep's Guide.

A few pairs of Golden Plover breed annually on the higher moors of Longdendale and of the country east of Macclesfield, where they arrive early in April. In the latter part of summer the families unite in flocks, and leave the breeding-grounds about the end of August. In autumn many migrants arrive from the north, and from then until spring, flocks, sometimes numbering as many as two hundred individuals, may be met with on the fallows and pastures of Wirral and the Plain.

The birds generally feed in company with Lapwings, but if disturbed the species quickly separate and wheel overhead in distinct flocks; the pointed wings and rapid flight of the Golden Plovers being in marked contrast to the deliberate movements of the round-winged Lapwings. When changing their feeding-grounds, Golden Plovers, especially when in small numbers, generally fly in an irregular V formation, which Lapwings seldom do.

Certain districts are specially attractive to this species. Every winter we see flocks in the fields at Baguley and Wythenshawe; and another favourite haunt is the reclaimed marshes of Sealand, where we have seen birds as early as September 15th. In frosty

weather, when unable to obtain food in the fields, the Golden Plovers move with the Lapwings to the coast, returning as soon as a thaw sets in. The migratory flocks sometimes remain in the lowlands until after the resident birds have returned to their nesting quarters on the moors. On April 9th, 1887, we saw birds in breeding plumage at the head of the Goyt Valley, and five days later we met with three small flocks still lingering in the low-lying meadows near Sale.

The Longdendale shepherds know the Golden Plover as the 'Sheep's Guide.' They say that the bird's liquid *tlui* warns the sheep on these lonely moors of the approach of a human being, and causes them to run from the intruder.

GREY PLOVER.

SQUATAROLA HELVETICA (Linnæus).

The Grey Plover is a regular winter visitor to the estuaries of the Dee and Mersey, where it is sometimes seen feeding in considerable flocks on the sandbanks and mudflats. It is much more of a shore bird than the Golden Plover, and we have no record of its occurrence inland in Cheshire. The late H. Durnford, speaking of the large numbers of Grey Plovers which frequented the mouth of the Mersey in September 1873, remarked that they did not associate with other Waders, although occasionally a straggler might be seen with a party of Dunlins.¹

¹ *Zoologist*, ser. II. vol. ix. p. 3912. 1874.

LAPWING.

VANELLUS VULGARIS, Bechstein.

*Peewit, Peesnips, Plover, Green Plover, Happinch,
Lappinch.*

On account of its striking appearance and peculiarly characteristic habits, the Lapwing is one of the most familiar of our resident birds. It is present throughout the year in all parts of the county, except in winter, when it is absent from the moorlands. About the end of February the birds begin to pair; the noisy aerial love-antics of the males at this season forcing themselves upon the notice of every one in their neighbourhood. By this time those birds which nest upon the hills and moors in the East have returned to their breeding quarters, but a spell of frost or snow will drive them back to the lowlands. Equally at home in the pastures and amongst the heather, the Lapwing abounds throughout the Hill Country during the breeding season. The flocks usually descend from the uplands in October, but in the mild season of 1897-98 they were to be seen on the moors east of Macclesfield throughout the winter.

In spite of systematic egg-gathering by farm-labourers and others, the Lapwing holds its own in Wirral and the Plain. In the rural districts almost every field supports at least a pair of birds, whose vociferous anxiety on behalf of their eggs or young often defeats its own purpose.

As soon as the young are able to fly, the birds commence to pack, and we have seen flocks of thirty as early as the 4th of June. On the approach of

winter the small parties amalgamate, forming flocks ranging from fifty to five hundred birds, or even more. The benefit derived by the farmer from the presence of so many of these useful birds in his fields, although little recognised, is incalculable. These flocks will frequent a restricted area for many weeks, and may be seen day after day feeding in the same fields if the weather continue open. During a hard frost, however, the birds retire to the coast. In open weather we have seen immense flocks, which could only be numbered by thousands, on the low-lying reclaimed land of the Dee Estuary.

TURNSTONE.

STREPSILAS INTERPRES (Linnæus).

The Turnstone is only known in Cheshire as a passing migrant in spring and autumn, and Brockholes described it as scarce on the shores of Wirral.¹ Two birds in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, were shot at the mouth of the Dee on August 31st, 1892, by Dr. Herbert Dobie, who saw many others at the same time; and an immature bird in the same collection was shot at Hoylake in 1893.² Mr. L. Jones has a specimen in his collection of local birds at Hilbre Island; and in the Brown Museum, Liverpool, there is a group of Turnstones which were obtained in the same locality. There were three specimens in the museum of the Manchester Natural History Society which were obtained at the mouth of the Mersey in 1864. Mr. F. L. Congreve informs us that he shot two at Burton in August 1897, and we have seen one in Mr. R. H. R.

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 11.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 334.

Brocklebank's collection which he killed at Hilbre on September 29th, 1899. Mr. Brocklebank informs us that Turnstones were fairly plentiful in the Dee Estuary in the autumn of 1899.

OYSTER-CATCHER.

HÆMATOPUS OSTRALEGUS, Linnæus.

Although it does not now nest on the Wirral coast, the Oyster-catcher cannot be classed as other than a resident species, as it frequents the shore in varying numbers throughout the year. Mr. R. Newstead has met with it occasionally in winter on the Mersey shore at Stanlow and Ince,¹ and at that season it is sometimes abundant in the Dee Estuary. When walking along the shore from West Kirby to Parkgate in the month of November, we have been struck with the large numbers of Oyster-catchers in the estuary. Of the many flocks, more than one would comprise at least five hundred birds.

The Oyster-catcher still breeds on the Welsh side of the Dee Estuary, and on May 13th, 1894, we saw a flock of about two hundred birds on the Cheshire shore between Heswall and Thurstaston. Brockholes does not appear to have actually seen a nest, but considered that he had good authority for stating that the bird had bred near Hoylake.²

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 334.

² Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 11.

BLACK-WINGED STILT.

HIMANTOPUS CANDIDUS, Bonnaterre.

An example of this rare straggler, an adult male, was obtained on the Mersey at Latchford by Mr. R. Nunnerley, senior. He shot this bird and other rarities, in the county about forty or fifty years ago, but unfortunately the exact dates of the occurrences have not been preserved. Mr. R. Nunnerley of Congleton, a keen sportsman and collector himself, in whose possession the birds are now, vouches for the localities, having heard his father frequently recount the circumstances of their capture.

GREY PHALAROPE.

PHALAROPUS FULICARIUS (Linnæus).

The Grey Phalarope is an irregular autumn visitor to Cheshire. Examples have occurred far inland, but the bird has been obtained most frequently on the coast. It exhibits a strange absence of fear of man, and its indifference to his presence often leads to its destruction.

Dr. Dobie informs us that Captain Congreve has a water-colour sketch of a Grey Phalarope, marked 'Burton, October 4th, 1853.' At a meeting of the Manchester Natural History Club, held on September 28th, 1863, the late Dr. T. Alcock exhibited a specimen which had been shot on the Mersey, and a communication was made to the effect that another had been

killed on a pond near Nantwich some years previously.¹ In the memorable invasion of this species in 1866, one was shot on Bidston Hill on September 19th,² and another at Warrington,³ whilst inland one was killed on a reservoir at Handforth by Mr. Peter Cunliffe, and is now in his possession. Mr. H. S. Claye has an example which was obtained on Gawsworth Fishponds in 1868. On October 6th, 1874, Admiral A. J. Clark-Kennedy watched a Grey Phalarope swimming in one of the brackish pools on the landward side of the Leasowe Embankment. The bird was so tame that he was almost able to touch it with his walking-stick.⁴ On November 5th, 1880, a Grey Phalarope was shot on the shore at West Kirby by Mr. M. R. Meredith.⁵

There was a considerable migration of Grey Phalaropes to our coasts in the autumn of 1891, when several examples were obtained in Cheshire and North Wales. One in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, was killed on the Dee at Queensferry on October 17th, another was taken lower down the river at Connah's Quay, and a third was obtained at Northwich.⁶ An example still retaining the summer plumage was shot at Wallasey early in August 1893, and was presented by Dr. Dobie to the Grosvenor Museum, Chester.⁶

The most recent example we have seen is one which was shot on a pit at Malpas on October 3rd, 1896.

¹ *Minute-Book, Manchester Natural History Club*, p. 166 (MS.).

² *Journal of the Liverpool Naturalists' Field Club*, Oct. 1867, p. 173.

³ J. H. Gurney, jun., *A Summary of the Occurrences of the Grey Phalarope in Great Britain during the Autumn of 1866*.

⁴ *Zoologist*, ser. II. vol. ix. p. 4339.

⁵ *Field*, vol. lvi. p. 715. 1880.

⁶ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 335.

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE.

PHALAROPUS HYPERBOREUS (Linnæus).

This species is always rarer in England than the Grey Phalarope, and there are only two records of its occurrence in Cheshire. Byerley says, on the authority of Mather, a Liverpool taxidermist, that a Red-necked Phalarope was killed on a pit in Wirral;¹ and there is an old specimen in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, which is said to have been obtained in the neighbourhood of that city, but about which further details are, unfortunately, lacking.²

WOODCOCK.

SCOLOPAX RUSTICULA, Linnæus.

From October to March the Woodcock may be met with in woods and plantations in all parts of the county, but the numbers which visit us are by no means constant. The winter of 1893-94 was noticeable for the large numbers of Woodcocks that were shot, whilst in 1896-97 very few were obtained.

The majority of the birds leave in March, but probably a few pairs remain every year to breed, nests having been recorded from widely separated localities. Brockholes writes:—‘During the spring of 1860, three or four pairs of Woodcocks frequented woods near Birkenhead until an advanced date. In the evening of August 24th, 1856, I saw a Woodcock between Bidston and Upton. I have also seen a Woodcock in

¹ Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 20.² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 335.

one or two other instances in summer. I therefore think there is little doubt that this species occasionally breeds in Wirral, although I have no authentic instance of a nest.¹ On April 20th, 1858, a nest containing four young birds was found at Somerford by Sir Charles Shakerley's keeper;² and Mr. F. Nicholson informs us that at Tatton Park some years ago a bird was killed on a nest which contained four eggs. On the 31st of July 1867, a Woodcock was caught by accident in a hawk-trap in the neighbourhood of Holmes Chapel. The bird, which showed no signs of having been wounded, had presumably bred in the district.³ Mr. F. S. Graves tells us that a nest containing three newly-hatched young birds was found in a small wood at Astbury, near Congleton, in the spring of 1897.

In the upper valleys of the Dane and Goyt the bird has frequently nested; we have reliable evidence that both eggs and young have been found on several occasions in the plantations above Goyts Bridge, and in the wooded cloughs near Bosley. Mr. N. Neave tells us that he flushed a Woodcock on April 5th, 1891, in a wood below Teggs Nose, near Macclesfield.

A uniformly dove-coloured Woodcock, now in the possession of Lord Stanley of Alderley, was shot in Alderley Park some years ago.⁴

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 12.

² *Field*, vol. xi. p. 472. 1858.

³ *Field*, vol. xxx. p. 167. 1867.

⁴ *Land and Water*, Dec. 25, 1886, p. 640.

GREAT SNIPE.

GALLINAGO MAJOR (J. F. Gmelin).

The Great Snipe is said to have occurred in Cheshire on several occasions; but as large examples of the Common Snipe are often mistaken for it, and as no evidence of identity is adduced in any instance, some of the records must be regarded with caution.

Byerley reports two occurrences at Upton near Birkenhead, and several at Hoylake;¹ and two birds are said to have been shot near Chester in the winter of 1857-58.² Three others are recorded by Dr. Dobie: one shot by the late E. C. Walker on the site of the Chester railway station; another by the late Captain Park Yates's keeper at Stanlow Point, Ince; and a third in the meadows of the Gowy at Barrowmore, in the winter of 1889.³ A Great Snipe, in the collection of Colonel Dixon, was shot at Withington about fifty years ago.

COMMON SNIPE.

GALLINAGO CŒLESTIS (Frenzel).

During the winter months the Common Snipe is generally distributed throughout the county, frequenting pit-sides and damp meadows, often singly or in couples, but sometimes in wisps of considerable size. In the early spring, however, the majority of these

¹ Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 19.

² *Zoologist*, ser. I. vol. xvi. p. 5976. 1885. *Field*, vol. xi. p. 81. 1858.

³ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 336.

migrants leave us; and except in the Hill Country the bird is very local during the breeding season.

Brockholes knew of no authentic instance of the Snipe nesting in Wirral,¹ although it breeds at Aldford near Chester, and in the marshes in the neighbourhood of Frodsham, Helsby, and Thornton-le-Moors.² The bird breeds at Oakmere,² and we have seen eggs which were taken in other parts of Delamere Forest. Many Snipe nested at Carrington before the reclamation of the Moss, and a few pairs still breed annually in marshy fields at Mobberley, Handforth, and Siddington. Within half a mile of Knutsford Station, several broods are reared every year on a piece of boggy ground, now enclosed by Mr. R. H. Watt, who affords every protection to the Snipe and other species which frequent the place. In North and Mid Cheshire we have often flushed Snipe in July and August, and Brockholes and Dr. Dobie record the occurrence of the bird at that season in Wirral, and near Chester; but we do not think that this is proof that these individuals had been reared in the immediate neighbourhood.

The great stronghold of the Snipe in Cheshire in the spring is the high ground in the east and north-east. The bird breeds in considerable numbers throughout Longdendale, on the moors in the neighbourhood of Swineshaw Brook, and in the country from Lyme southward to Bosley and east to the Derbyshire border. The nests are found as frequently in marshy spots in the pastures as amongst the heather on the moors; and the drumming of the birds, together with their curious cry—*chipper, chipper, chipper*—as they fly to and fro high overhead, cannot fail to attract the attention of any one crossing the hills.

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 12.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 336.

At Oulton Park in November 1875, a Snipe was obtained under peculiar circumstances. It was shot while running about upon the slate roof of a building two storeys high, where it was apparently searching for food.¹

JACK SNIPE.

GALLINAGO GALLINULA, Linnæus.

The Jack Snipe, a regular winter visitor, is much less plentiful than its larger congener in most parts of Cheshire, though Mr. H. S. Claye tells us that it outnumbers the Common Snipe on the hills between Bosley and Wincle. Brockholes states that until 1863 it was abundant in Wirral, but after that date he noticed a falling-off in its numbers;² and Dr. Dobie is also of the opinion that the bird is rarer than it formerly was.³

DUNLIN.

TRINGA ALPINA, Linnæus.

The Dunlin formerly nested upon the marshes of the Dee Estuary. Brockholes says that 'a few birds breed in suitable places in Wirral. In the spring of 1871 I received eleven eggs which were taken by a boy on the Dee Marshes near Puddington and Shotwick.'² The greater part of this marshland is now under cultivation, and Dr. Dobie says that there is no evidence that the Dunlin breeds there now,⁴ though he has seen these eggs, and is satisfied that they are Dunlin's.

¹ *Field*, vol. xlv. p. 561. 1875.

² Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 12.

³ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 336.

⁴ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 337.

A few non-breeding birds frequent the coast during the summer months, but it is at the periods of migration that the Dunlin is most abundant, while throughout the winter large flocks may be seen at low tide feeding on the sandbanks and mudflats of the Dee and Mersey Estuaries. On May 14th, 1894, there were thousands of Dunlins in breeding plumage on the saltings between Burton and Queensferry. The birds allowed us to approach within a few feet before they took wing, the Ringed Plovers, in whose company they were feeding, always rising first.

The Dunlin nests in several places on the Pennine Range, but up to the present no evidence exists of its breeding on the moorlands of East Cheshire.

LITTLE STINT.

TRINGA MINUTA, Leisler.

The Little Stint is occasionally met with in the estuaries of the Dee and Mersey in autumn, but does not appear to have been observed on the spring migration. Brockholes describes it as scarce.¹ There is a local specimen, dated 1838, in Captain Congreve's collection at Burton;² and Mr. F. L. Congreve tells us that he obtained two on the marsh at Burton in August 1897. At the beginning of September 1892, three Little Stints were shot from a small flock on the Chester Golf Links, near Queensferry, by Dr. Herbert Dobie. Two of these birds are now in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester.²

In the Mersey Estuary several examples were obtained on the sands above Runcorn in October 1854.³

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 12.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 337.

³ N. Cooke, *Zoologist*, ser. I. vol. xiii. p. 4560. 1855.

TEMMINCK'S STINT.

TRINGA TEMMINCKI, Leisler.

[Brockholes states that he shot an example of this rare Stint on the Dee Marsh, near Shotwick, on August 25th, 1862. At the same time, he saw another bird which he did not secure.¹]

CURLEW SANDPIPER.

TRINGA SUBARQUATA (Güldenstädt).

Although much rarer than on the east coast of England, the Curlew Sandpiper occurs in small numbers upon our shores in autumn. Brockholes says that it is not uncommon at that season, when it consorts with Dunlins;¹ and Dr. Dobie has occasionally seen examples in the Chester shops in strings of Dunlins from the Dee Marshes.² Mr. R. Newstead has frequently met with the bird in the Mersey Estuary. Dr. Dobie states, on the authority of Mr. W. Bell, that a Curlew Sandpiper was shot at New Brighton in January 1891, a remarkably late date.³

Inland, the Curlew Sandpiper has been reported from Tushingham, near Malpas, where after stormy weather a pair were observed by the side of a pool on October 14th, 1875.³

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 12.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 337.

³ D. Vawdrey, *Field*, vol. xlv. p. 504. 1875.

PURPLE SANDPIPER.

TRINGA STRIATA, Linnæus.

The sandy shores of Wirral offer no attraction to this rock-loving species, and consequently it has been seldom observed. Brockholes mentions one which was shot on the shore near Parkgate about the year 1866;¹ and Dr. Dobie records that two or three were killed at Moreton in the autumn of 1893.² Mr. R. H. R. Brocklebank has a specimen in his collection that was shot, in January 1898, out of a small flock which were feeding amongst the rocks at Hilbre Island.

KNOT.

TRINGA CANUTUS, Linnæus.

The Knot is never observed on our shores in the immense flocks which frequent the east coast of England, but a fair number occur every autumn and winter in the estuaries of the Dee and Mersey.³

SANDERLING.

CALIDRIS ARENARIA (Linnæus).

The Sanderling is well known as a spring and autumn visitor to the Cheshire coast. Brockholes states that a few frequent the Leasowe shore in winter,⁴ and one was killed at Connah's Quay on November 3rd, 1885.² In 1872, Sanderlings on the return migration were

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 13.² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 338.³ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 12; Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 338.⁴ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 11.

obtained in June. The late H. Durnford shot a number on the first of that month, and one out of a flock of fifteen on the 11th, on the sandbanks at the mouth of the Mersey.¹

Inland, a Sanderling was obtained at Tarporley in May 1887.²

RUFF.

MACHETES PUGNAX (Linnæus).

Even on migration the Ruff is far from common, and has only been observed in the west of the county, where more are obtained in autumn than in spring. Brockholes says that a few occur almost every autumn on the Dee Marshes, and that several were obtained there one spring.³ Captain Congreve has a specimen in his collection which was shot at Burton, and Mr. R. H. R. Brocklebank killed a Ruff in the same locality in September 1897, Mr. Francis Congreve obtaining a Reeve at the same time. An immature bird in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, was killed at the mouth of the Dee in 1880.² Byerley mentions one shot at West Kirby in October 1852,⁴ and another is recorded by Mr. H. E. Smith from the Dee Marshes.⁵ Mr. Brocklebank informs us that Ruffs were fairly plentiful on the Marshes in August 1899. Mr. H. Garland possesses a bird in breeding plumage which was killed some years ago on the Eaton Estate;² and there are also two in the Warrington Museum which were obtained on Frodsham Marsh—one in 1884, and the other, shot by Mr. T. Dainteth, in March 1889.

¹ *Zoologist*, ser. II. vol. vii. p. 3149. 1872.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 338.

⁴ Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 19.

³ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 12.

⁵ H. E. Smith, *op. cit.* p. 240.

COMMON SANDPIPER.

TOTANUS HYPOLEUCUS (Linnæus).

Sand Snipe, Summer Snipe.

As a rule the Common Sandpiper arrives at its breeding-grounds in Cheshire during the last ten days of April; but in 1896, Oldham saw a pair on the Mersey at Marple on the 19th, and in 1898 a solitary bird at Bosley Reservoir on the 11th of that month. Throughout the summer it abounds on all the streams and reservoirs in the Hill Country, and is not uncommon on many of the meres and rivers of the Plain. A few pairs breed on the marshes at Thornton-le-Moors, Ince, and Helsby,¹ but the bird is not often met with in Wirral, where Brockholes believed its numbers had decreased.² It is still found at Burton;¹ and on the 16th of May 1894, we flushed a bird from a pool behind the Leasowe Embankment. Mr. W. Bell informs us that it has nested near Woodchurch.

In the Plain the Sandpiper frequents the larger streams. We have met with it in summer on the Dee between Farndon and Chester. Several pairs nest annually on the Bollin between Wilmslow and Warburton, and on the Dane below Holmes Chapel, whilst a few even rear their broods on the banks of the polluted Mersey between Stockport and its confluence with the Irwell. One or two pairs breed on most of the meres and larger pools, where it is interesting to see a bird, usually associated in one's mind with a brawling stream in the hills, perfectly at home as it runs about on the lily-pads float-

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 338.² Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 12.

ing on the still water. The birds are most plentiful in the Plain soon after they arrive in the country at the end of April, and in August when they have left their breeding-grounds in the Hills. At the latter season the notes of passing birds are often heard after dark in places far removed from their usual haunts.

In East Cheshire, during May, June, and July, the Sandpiper abounds not only on the Goyt, Etherow, and Dane, but on every streamlet amongst the hills; whilst on the margins of the reservoirs in Longdendale, at Bosley, and elsewhere, no bird is more plentiful. It is even more characteristic of this district than the Dipper or Grey Wagtail. By the end of July most of the Sandpipers have left the hill streams, and on the first of August we have walked from the source of the Goyt to Whaley Bridge without seeing a single bird. A few frequent the reservoirs, however, until the time of migration, about the end of that month or the beginning of September.

In May, when the birds are pairing, the cock flies round the hen in circles, varying from a few feet to a hundred yards in diameter. In the course of this flight, which is exceedingly rapid, he rises to a considerable height, trilling the while his pleasing song. Every now and then he swoops down suddenly and passes close by the hen, who is apparently little impressed by his extravagant antics. Sometimes he runs, with wings raised above his back or drooping by his sides, in some exposed situation, such as the top of a wall or the trunk of a fallen tree, from which he can attract her attention. We have even seen these evolutions performed on the public road at Goyts Bridge.

When the eggs are much incubated, the sitting bird, on being flushed, slips from the nest and runs for

several yards with depressed body and trailing wings as if disabled. It then rises and flies, with a plaintive *weet, weet, weet*, to a safe distance, from whence it anxiously watches the course of events. Both birds generally display extreme solicitude for their newly-hatched young. We have seen a female run shrieking along a wall, with trailing wings and expanded and deflected tail, while we, only a foot or two away, stood over the downy chicks huddled together at the foot of the wall. This demonstration failing to lure us from her offspring, she dropped from the wall and rolled and tumbled in the grass at our very feet. The male, meanwhile, kept up an anxious clamour from a stone wall, although at a more respectful distance.

We have, however, sometimes seen both parents, though anxiously calling, retreat to a distance of several yards from the spot where we were searching for the young, whose presence is often betrayed by their feeble answering pipe as they lie concealed in the long grass. Their behaviour in this respect differs from that of the young of many wading birds. Young Ringed Plovers, for instance, will crouch absolutely quiescent amongst the pebbles on the beach, where the safety gained by their protective coloration would be discounted if they replied to their parents' warning cries.

SPOTTED SANDPIPER.

TOTANUS MACULARIUS (Linnæus).

[American specimens of the Spotted Sandpiper have been so often palmed off upon credulous collectors as British-killed birds, that no record of its occurrence should be accepted without a searching investigation.

An adult bird in the Warrington Museum is labelled, 'Shot by Ed. Lord from the banks of the Mersey near Fiddler's Ferry, May 1863.' After so great a lapse of time it is impossible to substantiate this occurrence, but the evidence in its support is considered by the late Henry Seebohm¹ and Mr. J. H. Gurney, jun.,² to be trustworthy, in that it has never been refuted. The specimen was, prior to its acquisition by the Warrington Museum, in the possession of the late C. S. Gregson, who supplied Mr. H. E. Smith with the following information:—'Edwin Lord of Warrington shot two on the Mersey below that town in May 1863, one of which I possess. In 1865 he again saw this species on the river, but did not get a shot.'³ Mr. Gregson subsequently informed Mr. Gurney that he saw in all four specimens in the flesh and in process of skinning by Lord.² Mr. Linnæus Greening told Dr. Dobie that his father, the late Noah Greening, saw Mr. Gregson's specimen in the flesh.⁴ Assuming that no deception was practised upon Mr. Gregson with regard to the facts of the case, it is very remarkable that this casual straggler from the American continent should have occurred at the same place on the Mersey in two different years, 1863 and 1865.]

GREEN SANDPIPER.

TOTANUS OCHROPUS (Linnæus).

Although less common than in the eastern counties, the Green Sandpiper has been observed in Cheshire on a good many occasions in autumn and winter. Brock-

¹ *British Birds*, vol. iii. p. 123.

² *Rambles of a Naturalist*, pp. 255-262.

³ H. E. Smith, *op. cit.* p. 239.

⁴ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 339.

holes says: 'About half a dozen occur every autumn at Puddington and neighbouring parts of the Dee Marshes. I have also seen an occasional one in ponds at Ness in autumn.'¹ Dr. Dobie has a bird shot on the Dee Marsh in September 1891. There are specimens in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, from Ince, Chester, and Barrowmore, the last shot on January 4th, 1890. One which was shot at Aldersey on February 5th, 1894, had frequented that neighbourhood through the winter. The Rev. C. Wolley-Dod reports that the Green Sandpiper is occasionally seen at Edge in September;² and Mr. J. W. Lewis informs us that one was shot between Sandbach and Alsager in 1895. Mr. Peter Cunliffe has a specimen which was obtained some years ago at Handforth; and on August 25th, 1897, we saw a party of four birds on the margin of Marbury Mere, near Northwich.

Mr. F. Nicholson informs us that the Green Sandpiper is met with nearly every year on Tatton and other meres near Knutsford. We hear from Mr. F. L. Congreve that this species is often observed on the Dee Marshes throughout the summer months.

COMMON REDSHANK.

TOTANUS CALIDRIS (Linnæus).

During autumn and winter the Common Redshank frequents the shores of Wirral in considerable numbers. Inland, it is of rare occurrence; the only example we have seen was shot in the Mersey Valley at Warburton some years ago.

A few pairs nest on the Dee Marshes at one spot,

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 12.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 339.

which for obvious reasons it would be unwise to define too clearly; and Mr. R. Newstead says that the bird also breeds on the marshes near Thornton-le-Moors.¹ On May 14th, 1894, we visited the colony on the Dee Marshes, which comprised seven or eight pairs of birds. We were surprised to find that the nests were not concealed, as is usually the case with this species, being merely depressions in the grass, which was closely cropped by sheep. Some of the nests contained eggs, and we came across three young birds in down. One of these sought refuge in a 'gutter,' taking to the water to avoid capture, and swimming with ease. So long as we were in the vicinity of the nests, the parent birds showed their anxiety by 'yelping' incessantly.

Brockholes' statement that a bird that was killed on the Dee Marshes about the year 1864 was, judging from the description furnished, most probably a Spotted Redshank, *T. fuscus* (Linnæus),² is not definite enough to warrant the inclusion of that species in a Cheshire avifauna.

GREENSHANK.

TOTANUS CANESCENS (J. F. Gmelin).

The Greenshank is a scarce visitor on migration to the shores of Wirral. Brockholes states that it is occasionally met with on the Dee Marshes.³ A specimen in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, was obtained with two others from a flock at Burton on August 29th, 1891;¹ and Mr. F. L. Congreve tells us that in the same month in 1897 there were a number of Greenshanks with Bar-tailed Godwits on the marshes near Burton.

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 340.

² Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 11.

³ *Ibid.* p. 12.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT.

LIMOSA LAPPONICA (Linnæus).

The Bar-tailed Godwit visits our shores in varying numbers on migration. Brockholes says it is sometimes common in autumn on the Dee Marshes,¹ and Dr. Dobie saw large flocks there in the autumn of 1892, when he obtained a number of specimens. Mr. R. Newstead states that examples from the Dee Marshes are often brought to the Grosvenor Museum; but he has not seen any from the Mersey Estuary, where the bird seems to be scarcer.²

Inland, Dr. Dobie reports the occurrence of two birds on the Mersey at Arpley;² and Mr. C. F. Fish tells us that on two occasions he has seen Bar-tailed Godwits in the water-meadows bordering the river near Sale.

Exceptionally, this species has been met with in winter. In February 1896 we saw a bird which had been shot at High Legh early in that month; and Dr. Dobie shot one at West Kirby on December 11th, 1886, whose late stay, however, may be accounted for by the fact that it had been previously wounded in the leg.²

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT.

LIMOSA BELGICA (J. F. Gmelin).

The Black-tailed Godwit is not included in Brockholes' Wirral list, and is only known in Cheshire as a rare visitor on migration. There is a specimen in Captain Congreve's collection which was shot a few

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 12.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 340.

years ago at Burton, and another, killed on the Dee Estuary, was seen by Dr. Dobie when in the hands of a Chester taxidermist.¹

COMMON CURLEW.

NUMENIUS ARQUATA (Linnæus).

At all seasons of the year the Curlew may be seen feeding on the sandbanks and mudflats of the estuaries of the Dee and Mersey, being present in the largest numbers from the end of summer until March, when the majority leave for their breeding quarters. Even in the middle of May, when the breeding season is at its height, we have seen considerable numbers of immature and non-breeding birds on the saltings and sandbanks; whilst in winter we have observed flocks, generally comprising from fifty to a hundred birds, scattered all over the miles of banks exposed at low tide.

A fair number of Curlews breed on the Longdendale moors and in some parts of the highlands east of Macclesfield, whilst in some places, such as Shuttlings Low and the neighbourhood of the Cat and Fiddle, they are even plentiful. When the birds are pairing, they lose to some extent their habitual wariness, and become a prominent feature in the bird-life of the moorlands. It is then easy to approach them, as they rise to a height of about forty feet above the heather and sail with outstretched wings, uttering their curious bubbling cry; but when the eggs are laid, the birds usually leave the vicinity of the nest at the slightest alarm. When the young are hatched, parental affection overcomes caution, and the old birds are loth to

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 340.

leave their offspring, evincing their anxiety by distressful cries. Curlews nested annually on Carrington Moss prior to its reclamation, and we have often seen birds there in the spring. In former years they bred on Macclesfield Moss, and probably at Lindow and other of the low-lying mosses on the Plain.

In March we have occasionally seen Curlews flying up the Mersey Valley at Sale on their passage from the coast to the Hills, our attention being called to the birds, high overhead, by their characteristic cry.

WHIMBREL.

NUMENIUS PHÆOPUS (Linnæus).

The Whimbrel is a rather scarce visitor to the Cheshire coast on the spring and autumn migrations. There is a specimen in the Warrington Museum, obtained at Runcorn in 1852, and another in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester.

Dr. Dobie, who was informed that the Whimbrel is often seen in spring in the fields at Sealand, has examined an example which was obtained in that locality.¹ Mr. N. Neave tells us that a Whimbrel was caught in a net at Rainow in 1885, at the end of November or the beginning of December—a very unusual time of year for the occurrence of this species. Mr. J. H. Salter, who confirms Mr. Neave's identification, says he well remembers examining the skin, which has unfortunately been destroyed.

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 341.

ORDER GAVIÆ.

FAMILY LARIDÆ.—SUB-FAMILY STERNINÆ.

BLACK TERN.

HYDROCHELIDON NIGRA (Linnæus).

Although less frequently observed in Cheshire than in the eastern counties, the Black Tern has occurred several times on migration in spring and autumn. Brockholes only mentions one, a bird he saw on the Dee Marshes near Puddington, in autumn;¹ but the late W. Thompson told Dr. Dobie that one year he received several examples from the Dee Estuary.² In the collection of local birds at Swythamley Manor there is an adult, labelled 'Macclesfield Forest, 1862.' The late Dr. E. Crew of Alderley Edge possessed another mature bird, which was shot on Alderley Mere about the year 1885.

On the 1st of August 1887, Mr. J. J. Cash watched two Black Terns feeding at Rostherne Mere. He says they frequently settled for a brief period on a stake projecting from the water, and when on the wing, beat slowly up against the wind for a short distance, then turning, flew rapidly down-wind to repeat the manœuvre. In 1893, two birds were shot at Oakmere on April 22nd; only one was secured, an adult male, now in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester.³ We have seen a specimen in a cottage at Poynton, which was shot some years ago on the Pool.

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 16.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 341.

³ Dobie, *Zoologist*, ser. III. vol. xvii. p. 227. 1893.

COMMON TERN.

STERNA FLUVIATILIS, Naumann.

Sea Swallow.

Brockholes says that he believes that the Common Tern formerly bred in Wirral.¹ We have been able to obtain no confirmation of this supposition, and it certainly does not nest in Cheshire at the present day. The bird is often seen upon the coast and in the estuaries, and is sometimes met with in considerable numbers in autumn. In spring and autumn, 'Sea Swallows' are frequently seen inland on the meres and reservoirs, and though seldom identified are probably referable to this species. We have more than once observed them on Pickmere Mere, on one occasion so late as the 22nd of June. We have examined a Common Tern which was killed at the end of September 1896, on the flooded meadows near Sale.

ARCTIC TERN.

STERNA MACRURA, Naumann.

Sea Swallow.

Both Brockholes and Byerley appear to have overlooked the Arctic Tern; but as there are several breeding stations of this species on the North Wales coast, it is probably as plentiful as the Common Tern on our shores in autumn. Terns shot inland are seldom available for reference, being usually exhibited in

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 16.

glazed cases, where it is impossible to ascertain the proportion of black and white on the primaries.

The Arctic Tern, also, rarely wanders from the coast, and the majority of these specimens are probably Common Terns. We have, however, identified two examples of this species from inland localities; the first, a bird in immature plumage, was obtained by Oldham on September 21st, 1894, at Swineshaw Reservoir, near Staleybridge, where it had been shot on the previous day. It is now in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester. The other, in the possession of Mr. J. K. Taylor, was shot, together with a Common Tern, on a reservoir at Furness Vale, a year or two later.

LESSER TERN.

STERNA MINUTA, Linnæus.

The Lesser Tern breeds in several localities on the north coast of Wales, and in autumn it is not uncommon in the estuary of the Dee and off the coast of Wirral. There is no evidence that it has ever nested in Cheshire, and we have not heard of its occurrence inland.

NODDY TERN.

ANOUS STOLIDUS (Linnæus).

[In the *Field* for 1897 a note appeared from Mr. F. Congreve of Burton Hall to the effect that he had obtained a locally killed specimen of the Noddy Tern. He states that the specimen, which is in immature plumage, the grey crown being just visible, was shot on the Dee Marshes in winter, about six years

previously.¹ Dr. Dobie, who has carefully examined the bird and investigated the occurrence, writes us as follows:—‘I paid a visit to Wm. Lawton, Denhall, on January 2nd, 1898, and the following note I made immediately afterwards:—“Mr. William Lawton is an intelligent man of about sixty-five years of age, with all his faculties about him. He has shot many birds in the marshes and has taken an interest in stuffing them. He has sons who are sailors and have sent him home birds from various parts. Many of them he has put up in a large case. He has also a case of English seabirds, and amongst them a specimen of a Cape Pigeon, of which he gives the history and for which he does not claim any British origin. He has not put up any case for twenty years. Questioned about the Noddy Tern which he let Mr. Francis Congreve have, he says that ‘he set no store by it.’ He always considered it a kind of ‘Mother Carey’s Chicken,’ of which he says he has shot different kinds. He shot the Noddy about seven years ago (or it might have been more), about five hundred yards from Denhall Quay. He thinks it was in winter. He stuffed it himself, cut a stand for it with a circular saw and ‘granited’ it over. The bird came flying past him (*i.e.* he did not flush it). It was never put in a case, but was knocking about the house. He is absolutely certain that it is the bird he shot. That he is perfectly honest in this belief there can be no question: the weak point in the evidence is that there are foreign birds in his house which have been sent him by his sons, and there is the possibility that a Noddy thus obtained may have been confused in his mind with the bird he shot. He, however,

¹ *Field*, vol. xc. p. 592. 1897. Cf. *Zoologist*, ser. iv. vol. i. p. 510.

will not hear of this for a moment. There seems no possibility of getting confirmatory evidence.”

With these facts before us we can only agree with Dr. Dobie that, although there is a possibility that this bird was actually killed on the Dee Marshes, the evidence is insufficient to warrant the inclusion of the Noddy in the Cheshire list. It must be borne in mind that this tropical species is not likely to occur upon our coasts—some authorities, indeed, refuse to recognise it even as a casual wanderer to Europe.]

SUB-FAMILY LARINÆ.

SABINE'S GULL.

XEMA SABINI (Joseph Sabine).

Although this rare Gull has never been actually obtained in Cheshire, it is fairly entitled to a place in the county avifauna. An immature example was obtained on the Welsh side of the Dee Estuary, at Mostyn, at the end of October 1884. The bird was exhibited, on behalf of Dr. Dobie, at a meeting of the Zoological Society of London on February 2nd, 1886.¹

LITTLE GULL.

LARUS MINUTUS, Pallas.

The Little Gull is rare on the north-west coast of England, and has seldom been obtained in Cheshire. Byerley records one from New Ferry.² The years 1869-70 are memorable for the large number of

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 342.

² Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 23.

Little Gulls which visited the east coast of England, and about this time several were obtained on the marshes of the Dee Estuary near Queensferry.¹ Mr. W. Bell has a specimen that was shot on the Mersey, near New Brighton, on November 1st, 1880.² Mr. R. Newstead saw a Little Gull close to Chester on January 4th, 1895. He says :—‘ When crossing the Dee Bridge my attention was attracted by what I at first thought a species of Tern. The bird was in company with three or four Black-headed Gulls, but it did not seem at all pleased with their society, as it constantly made away from them. Time after time the bird flew quite close to me, giving every opportunity to note its colour-pattern, etc. It was immature, and I have not the least doubt as to the identity of the species. Several times the bird stooped and caught something from the surface of the water, and afterwards flew towards the Dee Mills. An hour later it had gone away.’

BLACK-HEADED GULL.

LARUS RIDIBUNDUS, Linnæus.

Seagull, Sea Crow.

Within the last twelve or thirteen years a small colony of Black-headed Gulls has established itself in Delamere Forest, but the bird does not breed elsewhere in the county. At all seasons of the year, however, the Black-headed Gull is common round the coast, and is frequently met with inland, where it is most abundant after heavy weather. Large numbers are always to be seen in the river and the docks at Birkenhead, in close

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 342. ² *Zoologist*, ser. III. vol. v. p. 27. 1881.

attendance upon the shipping for the sake of any scraps they may pick up. Dr. Dobie mentions that several members of a flock congregated about the Woodside Landing-stage on February 17th, 1894, had already assumed their brown hoods.¹

Black-headed Gulls often visit the meres and reservoirs, and numbers may be seen at almost any season on Marbury Mere and the subsidences near Northwich. The flooded water-meadows of the Mersey near Sale have always attracted many of these birds, which follow the course of the river, and their numbers have perceptibly increased since the Manchester Ship Canal was cut.

Mr. R. Newstead has observed that the Black-headed Gull sometimes eats beetles (*Coccinellidæ*), which are usually believed to be unpalatable.²

The gullery at Delamere is situated on a stretch of sandy waste covered with gorse and ling and surrounded by the birch and fir plantations of the forest. The nests are built amongst the rushes and other aquatic plants growing in some swampy pools, which have originated, like many other pools in the district, through the subsidence of the land overlying salt-deposits. When visiting the place in June 1899, we counted thirty adults at one time, as they flew clamouring above the water, and we occasionally caught sight of downy young ones skulking in the rushes. As the old birds were constantly coming and going, it is improbable that those we saw represented the full strength of the colony, which at the lowest estimate numbered fifteen pairs. The people in the district know the birds as 'Sea Crows,' a name which has evidently originated from their habit of following the plough.

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 343.

² *Entomologist*, vol. xxiv. p. 122. 1891.

COMMON GULL.

LARUS CANUS, Linnæus.

The Common Gull is well known on the Cheshire coast in autumn and winter, and Dr. Dobie, speaking of the west of the county, says it is frequently seen inland in rough weather.¹ This is, however, not the case in East Cheshire, where the bird is seldom met with. We have seen one which was shot in the hard winter of 1894-95, in the meadows at Sale, and another which was obtained many years ago at Rostherne. Mr. R. Nunnerley of Congleton tells us that he has shot the Common Gull in the neighbourhood of Macclesfield, but that it is much rarer than the Herring and Black-headed Gulls.

HERRING GULL.

LARUS ARGENTATUS, J. F. Gmelin.

Although the Herring Gull does not breed in Cheshire, it is more or less abundant off the coast and in the estuaries at all seasons of the year. It is often met with inland after stormy weather in winter, and we have several times seen it during the summer months in the Mersey Valley near Sale. Two or three may often be seen in company with the Black-headed Gulls at Great Budworth and the subsidences at Northwich. The majority of the birds seen on the coast as well as inland are in immature plumage.

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 343.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL.

LARUS FUSCUS, Linnæus.

There is no breeding station of the Lesser Black-backed Gull in Cheshire, but, like the Herring Gull, it is met with all the year round on the coast. Generally speaking, it is not so abundant as the Herring Gull, although Mr. R. Newstead says it is commoner than that species at Ince.¹ The Lesser Black-backed Gull does not very often occur inland, but adult as well as immature birds have been shot in the water-meadows at Sale.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL.

LARUS MARINUS, Linnæus.

The Great Black-backed Gull, although far less common than the two preceding species, is met with in autumn and winter round the coast of Cheshire. The bird does not often wander far from the sea, but at the end of October 1898 an adult was shot on the subsidence at Witton Brook, near Northwich, and was recorded in a Manchester newspaper as an 'Albatross.'

ICELAND GULL.

LARUS LEUCOPTERUS, Faber.

Rare at all times on the west coast of England, the Iceland Gull has only been obtained once in Cheshire. In the year 1897 we examined an immature bird in

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 344.

the possession of Mr. Edward Stanley of Manchester. He informed us that it had been shot by his brother at Hoylake 'about twenty years ago'—probably during the winter of 1872-73, when the bird was unusually plentiful on the coasts of Britain.

KITTIWAKE.

RISSA TRIDACTYLA (Linnæus).

The nearest place to the Cheshire coast where the Kittiwake nests is the rocky headland of the Little Orme, but the bird is frequently met with round the shores of Wirral, being, naturally, most abundant in winter. Immature birds occasionally wander inland. We have seen them in the meadows near Sale, and on the canal near Northwich. One was shot on a pond at Rostherne in the summer of 1894, and Dr. Dobie mentions another from the Dee above Chester.¹

FAMILY STERCORARIIDÆ.

GREAT SKUA.

MEGALESTRIS CATARRHACTES (Linnæus).

Except in the breeding season, the Great Skua is seldom seen inshore, and the evidence of its occurrence in Cheshire is not very satisfactory. Byerley says that one was shot in the act of attacking some chickens at Bidston-cum-Ford,² and Brockholes thought that a Skua which he saw at New Ferry belonged to this species.³

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 345.

² Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 23.

³ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 16.

POMATORHINE SKUA.

STERCORARIUS POMATORHINUS (Temminck).

Although much less common than on the east coast of England, the Pomatorhine Skua has been obtained several times in Cheshire. The occurrences have been chiefly in autumn. One was shot at Hoylake in September 1852.¹ There is an immature bird in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, which was shot in the Dee Estuary near Queensferry, on October 20th, 1890. Dr. Dobie has examined a bird in immature plumage which was shot at Bruera about the year 1880. It was feeding on a dead rabbit in company with another Skua.² There is a Pomatorhine Skua in mature plumage in the Brown Museum, Liverpool, which was killed on the Mersey near that city; and we have examined a young bird which was shot at Baguley in autumn, about the year 1892.

RICHARDSON'S SKUA.

STERCORARIUS CREPIDATUS (J. F. Gmelin).

This species occurs upon our coasts more frequently than any of the other Skuas. Examples have been several times shot in the Mersey Estuary.¹ The late H. Durnford considered that an example obtained on the Cheshire coast in September 1872 had the characters of the dark form specially pronounced.³ Some years ago a man killed a Richardson's Skua, with a

¹ Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 23.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 345.

³ *Zoologist*, ser. II. vol. vii. p. 3339. 1872.

potato, near Dunham Massey Station.¹ This bird, which we have seen, is an immature example of the dark form.

BUFFON'S SKUA.

STERCORARIUS PARASITICUS (Linnæus).

Buffon's Skua is seldom met with on the west coast of Britain, and we only know of one occurrence in Cheshire. A young bird, now in the Warrington Museum, was obtained on the Ship Canal at Latchford on October 3rd, 1894.

¹ J. E. Smith, *Manchester City News*, May 16th, 1874.

ORDER ALCÆ.

FAMILY ALCIDÆ.—SUB-FAMILY ALCINÆ.

RAZORBILL.

ALCA TORDA, Linnæus.

The sandy shores of Wirral are wholly unsuited to the habits of the rock-breeding Auks. Razorbills and Guillemots, however, breed on the cliffs of the Great and Little Orme and Puffin Island; and, except in the breeding season, a few birds may often be seen at sea off the Cheshire coast and in the estuaries. Storm-driven Razorbills are occasionally picked up inland; one was caught in a garden at Chester on January 27th, 1894,¹ and in the following month another was captured on the Ship Canal at Carrington.

COMMON GUILLEMOT.

URIA TROILE (Linnæus).

Like the Razorbill, the Common Guillemot is frequently met with off the shores of Cheshire, where it is most abundant in winter. At all seasons of the year dead bodies of this bird, as well as of the Razorbill and Puffin, may be seen lying among the *débris* washed up by the tide. An example of the ringed form

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 345.

of this species (*Uria ringvia*, Latham), now in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, was taken alive by a fisherman on the Mersey at Ince in 1882, and there is another, from Frodsham, in the Warrington Museum.¹

BLACK GUILLEMOT.

URIA GRYLLE (Linnæus).

According to Pennant, the Black Guillemot used to nest on the rocks at Llandudno,² but at the present day the nearest breeding station to Cheshire is the Isle of Man, and even there the bird is not common. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that the Black Guillemot is almost unknown upon the Wirral coast. Dr. Dobie informs us that Captain Congreve possesses a water-colour sketch of an immature bird, marked 'Burton, 1837.'

LITTLE AUK.

MERGULUS ALLE (Linnæus).

The Little Auk has occurred in Cheshire at irregular intervals during the winter months, but even in many years when large numbers have been observed on the eastern coasts none have reached our shores. An example, taken alive at Sale on December 10th, 1824, was preserved in the collection of the Manchester Natural History Society.³ Brockholes records one from Hoylake, and says that he once saw

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 346.

² *British Zoology*, new edition, 1812, vol. ii. p. 164.

³ J. Blackwall, *Loudon's Magazine of Natural History*, vol. ii. p. 275. 1829.

a bird in rough weather in the river near Liverpool.¹ Mr. H. H. Corbett informs us that he examined a Little Auk found alive on Alderley Edge some time between 1875 and 1880. A bird, which was shot on the wing at Manley during a heavy gale in the winter of 1886, is now in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester.² In the winter of 1895-96, Little Auks invaded the east coast of Britain in thousands, and were recorded from many inland localities. We have seen one which was taken at this time during heavy weather on Marbury Mere, near Northwich.

SUB-FAMILY FRATERCULINÆ.

PUFFIN.

FRATERCULA ARCTICA (Linnæus).

This bird breeds in considerable numbers on Priestholme, or, as it is generally called, Puffin Island, at the eastern entrance of the Menai Straits, and individuals wander occasionally to the Cheshire shore. Byerley states that Puffins have been taken on the Mersey as far up as Runcorn.³ Storm-driven birds are sometimes picked up in an exhausted condition inland; one was taken alive on the Eaton Estate in the winter of 1885-86, and another was found in a wood at Crabwall, near Chester, on October 27th, 1893.²

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 15.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 346.

³ Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 22.

ORDER PYGOPODES.

FAMILY COLYMBIDÆ.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER.

COLYMBUS GLACIALIS, Linnæus.

The Great Northern Diver is an occasional winter visitor to the Cheshire coast, and it has sometimes been taken on the inland waters. On April 9th, 1868, a rather late date for the occurrence of this species, Admiral A. Clark-Kennedy observed one swimming on the shallow water between Hoylake and Hilbre Island, about two hundred yards from the shore.¹ In the winter of 1890-91 a Great Northern Diver was shot at New Brighton,² and Mr. Thomas Comber informs us that an immature bird was captured a few years ago in a fisherman's net at the mouth of the Dee. Inland, a Great Northern Diver was shot many years ago on Styperson Pool, Adlington. Fourteen large perch were found in the gullet of this bird.³ In 1887 one was shot at Cuddington, and about the same time Mr. A. Cookson killed an immature bird at Oakmere.⁴

¹ 'Redshank,' *Manchester City News*, October 9th, 1895.

² J. Wrigley, *Notes on the Bird Life of Formby*, p. 18.

³ Stanley, *History of Birds*, 7th edition, 1857, p. 421.

⁴ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 347.

BLACK-THROATED DIVER.

COLYMBUS ARCTICUS, Linnæus.

We only know of one record of the Black-throated Diver on the Cheshire coast. In December 1876, Mr. J. Bushby of Formby killed one when shooting from a boat at the mouth of the Dee, and he was told that another had been shot the week before.¹

RED-THROATED DIVER.

COLYMBUS SEPTENTRIONALIS, Linnæus.

In autumn and winter the Red-throated Diver is not infrequently met with off the Wirral coast and in the estuaries. Brockholes states that, previous to the year 1860, it was common in winter at Hoylake;² and Mr. L. Jones has a bird in his collection which was shot in October 1894, at Hilbre. There is a bird in summer plumage from the Dee Estuary in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester; and Dr. Dobie has one, still retaining a good deal of red on the throat, which was caught in a fishing-net in the estuary near Flint on November 22nd, 1886. In September 1888, a red-throated bird and an immature example were shot off the Point of Air, at the mouth of the Dee;³ and Mr. R. Newstead tells us that one was killed on the Dee at Saltney Ferry in February 1895.

We have no record of the Red-throated Diver on any of the Cheshire meres, although we have seen

¹ *Field*, vol. xlix. p. 85. 1877.

² Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 15.

³ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 347.

examples, obtained on the reservoir at Combs just beyond the Derbyshire border. It occasionally ascends the rivers for some distance. One in the Warrington Museum was taken near Warrington Bridge on January 31st, 1849, and another was found alive in an ice-boat moored in the canal within a few yards of the Weaver at Acton Bridge, near Northwich, in the autumn of 1897.¹

FAMILY PODICIPEDIDÆ.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE.

PODICIPES CRISTATUS (Linnaeus).

Diver, Great Diver.

Except in Wirral and some parts of West Cheshire, where it is only known as a winter visitor, the Great Crested Grebe is resident throughout the county, being abundant on all the large sheets of water on the Plain, as well as on some of the reservoirs among the Hills. Indeed, this handsome species is found in greater numbers in Cheshire than in perhaps any other county in England. Although less numerous in winter, Grebes may be seen on the meres throughout the year, except when a hard frost drives them to the coast or to running water.

The following are the principal haunts of the Great Crested Grebe on the Cheshire Plain during the breeding season:—The meres or pools at Rostherne, Mere, Tatton, Arley, Great Budworth, Pickmere, Alderley, Capesthorpe, Oakmere, Hatchmere, Vale Royal, Oulton, Cholmondeley, Bar Mere, Marbury, Combermere; and

¹ F. Moss, *Manchester City News*, September 25, 1897.



W. H. L. C. T. - 1880 - N. Y.

PETTY POOL, VALE ROYAL.

Walton Reservoir near Warrington. In June 1899, we saw a pair with young on a 'flash' or subsidence in the salt district between Davenham and Lach Dennis. So far as we know the bird does not breed on any of the Longdendale Reservoirs, but a few pairs nest annually at Bosley Reservoir, and occasionally a pair rear their young on smaller reservoirs, such as the one at Higher Sutton on the hills east of Macclesfield. On each of these waters from one to half a dozen, or even more, pairs nest every year. On April 1st, 1899, we had fifteen Grebes in sight at once at Redes Mere, though from where we were standing only a portion of the water was visible; and in the autumn we have sometimes seen over a score of birds scattered over the surface of Rostherne Mere.

When the Great Crested Grebe is swimming, the body is so deeply sunk in the water that the upper parts between the neck and back are often submerged, and at a distance the bird would frequently escape notice were it not that, as it rolls to preen its feathers, the satin-like plumage of its under parts flashes like silver in the sunlight. The birds, which are seldom seen except on the water, present a very curious appearance when on the wing. From a boat, we have occasionally seen them flying high overhead, their necks outstretched and tippets expanded, and their lobed feet held stiffly behind them like a Puffin's. The adult Great Crested Grebe dives with extraordinary grace and agility, generally remaining under water from twenty to twenty-five seconds, and sometimes for as long as half a minute. We have often observed them make their way below the surface through dense beds of water-lilies fifteen yards or more across. The habit of diving, however, is not per-

fect until the bird is some weeks old, the downy young being fed by their parents. Young Grebes, even when almost as large as adults, can only dive in a very inefficient manner. They swim just below the water, their course being indicated by a small wave, and a foot is frequently protruded above the surface. Never out of sight for more than a few seconds, they only traverse a dozen yards or so at each dive.

By the middle of February the birds may be seen swimming in couples, engaged in fantastic love-making. Face to face, with ruffs expanded, raising themselves in the water, and stretching their necks vertically, they toy with one another's bills.

The floating mass of rotting vegetable matter which constitutes the nest is almost always built in the dense reed-beds fringing the meres. At Bosley Reservoir, however, where there are no reeds, the nests are moored in small clumps of osiers, often in an exposed situation. At Redes Mere, where there is no lack of reeds, we have frequently seen nests in the lily-beds fifty yards or more from the shore in places where the water is several feet deep. At one spot on the same mere, the stump of a large tree rises several inches above the surface of the water about fifteen yards from the shore. The stump is in open water, away from reeds or other cover; but in 1899 a pair of Grebes selected this exposed position, built a nest on the flat top of the stump, and succeeded in bringing off their young. The eggs, laid in May or June, are generally three or four in number. Mr. N. Neave informs us that he once found five in a nest at Rostherne Mere, and we have found the same number on one of the Anglesea lakes; but such cases are very exceptional. A considerable time elapses between the laying of each egg, for those in the same clutch are

always in different stages of incubation. It is well known that Grebes cover their eggs with nesting material during incubation, but the reason of their so doing is not clear. Single unstained, and consequently conspicuous, eggs are never covered; whereas when incubation commences, and the need for concealment is less, the eggs are always covered by the sitting bird on leaving the nest, and uncovered on its return. The rotting and fermenting mass generates considerable heat, as may be easily proved by thrusting the hand deep into the nest, and it is possible that the object in covering the eggs is actually to assist in incubation during the bird's absence.¹ The porous chalky surface of the eggs readily absorbs the juices exuding from the rotting vegetation, and they become increasingly discoloured as incubation advances. Both sexes participate in incubation; and additions to the structure are continually made by the bird which is not sitting, until the eggs are hatched.

The old Grebes are assiduous in their attention to their offspring for several weeks after birth. When first hatched, the young are carried on the back of one of the parents, whilst the other adult is engaged in fishing, and during the first few days of their existence they are never in the water for more than a few seconds at a time. The old bird, when carrying the young, sits higher in the water than usual, and by slightly raising the wings provides a safe cradle for the nestlings. The young at first are invisible from the shore, and their presence is only indicated by the pose of the old bird. We have never known this species to dive with the young on its back, as some Grebes are said to do.²

¹ Cf. Seebohm, *op. cit.* vol. iii. p. 457.

² *Ibid.* p. 471; and Saunders, *op. cit.* p. 722.

When about to dive, the parent bird raises itself in the water, and by flapping its wings shakes the young ones from its back. The tiny nestlings appear ill at ease in the water, and follow their parent closely in order to regain their resting-place, which they do by scrambling up over the tail. On the appearance of the other parent with food, the young ones, in their eagerness to be fed, will sometimes take the water by slipping off at the neck of the old bird which is carrying them. Occasionally, however, the young are fed whilst on the parent's back. Numbers of the young probably fall victims to the voracity of the pike, which attain a large size in the Cheshire meres, for it is a common occurrence to see the parents accompanied by only one or two nestlings.

When older, the young birds spend more of their time in the water. They keep up an incessant querulous cry, very different from the harsh croak of an adult Grebe, and are noisiest when one of the parents approaches with a struggling fish in its beak. They retain traces of the curious striped nestling plumage until they are almost as big as their parents. When a captured fish is brought to the surface the Great Crested Grebe appears to adjust its grip before swallowing it, but never throws its prey into the air to catch it again as it falls head downwards, a trait so noticeable in the mode of feeding of the Cormorant and Shag.

Considerable misapprehension exists as to the method of progression of Grebes when on land. Many of the earlier ornithologists asserted that the bird could not walk upright, and when on land shuffled along on its belly, pushing itself forward by its feet; and even in the illustrations of several modern works on Birds, Grebes are represented as sitting upon the tarsus or standing bolt

upright on their legs. Ungainly and awkward as these illustrations, and stuffed specimens in similar attitudes, appear, the Great Crested Grebe is an elegant and graceful bird when walking. The neck is curved, the body inclined forward, and the leg is flexed at the heel (suffrago) so that the tarsus is clear of the ground, with which it forms an acute angle, and the bird actually walks upon its toes. The bird's movements on land, though not rapid, are perfectly easy and natural.

Despite the protection extended to them by the Cheshire County Council, the Grebes are much molested on some of the meres, and do not always succeed in getting off their young until late in the season. At Redes Mere in 1899 some eggs were not hatched until the end of the third week in August, and on September 25th, 1897, we saw a young bird at Pickmere which could not have been more than three weeks old.

RED-NECKED GREBE.

PODICIPES GRISEIGENA (Boddaert).

Off the Cheshire shores, as elsewhere on the west coast of England, the Red-necked Grebe is a rather rare winter visitor. Brockholes says it is occasionally obtained in the estuary of the Dee,¹ and there is one in Mr. L. Jones's collection which he shot at Hilbre Island. On December 20th, 1898, we watched a Grebe feeding in Parkgate Gut, in the Dee Estuary. It took wing before we could get near enough to identify it with certainty, but it was undoubtedly either a Red-necked or a Slavonian Grebe.

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 15.

SLAVONIAN GREBE.

PODICIPES AURITUS (Linnæus).

The Slavonian Grebe has only been noticed twice in Cheshire. Captain Congreve has a bird in his collection labelled 'Burton, January 1839;'¹ and Mr. R. Nunnerley possesses an adult in summer plumage which was shot by his father, then resident at Knutsford, on Tatton Mere about forty years ago.

BLACK-NECKED GREBE.

PODICIPES NIGRICOLLIS, C. L. Brehm.

The Black-necked Grebe is a rare straggler to the Cheshire coast and estuaries. Byerley records one from the Mersey near Tranmere;² and there is a specimen in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, which was captured in a fishing-net at the same place in December 1897. A young male was shot in rough weather on September 27th, 1856, on a pond at Bagillt, on the Welsh side of the Dee Estuary.³

LITTLE GREBE.

PODICIPES FLUVIATILIS (Tunstall).

*Dabchick, Diver, Little Diver, Dowker,
Jacky Dowker, Footinarse.*

In the breeding season the Little Grebe, though nowhere common, is widely distributed throughout the

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 348.² Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 22.³ A. O. Walker, *Zoologist*, ser. I. vol. xiv. p. 5321. 1856.

Cheshire lowlands, and in the winter it is often seen on waters where it does not nest. At this latter season, even when the ponds and meres are not frozen, we have often come across the bird on the swift-flowing streams and rivers. It is probable that a few pairs nest in suitable localities in the Hill Country, for we have seen Little Grebes on a pool in Lyme Park in July.

Little Grebes occasionally nest on the meres, but the majority of our resident birds breed on marlpits in secluded situations. The nesting habits of this species agree in many respects with those of the Great Crested Grebe; the eggs, five or six in number, are always in different stages of incubation, and they are exposed when there are only one or two in the nest, but always covered when the bird has begun to sit. The Little Grebe does not readily forsake the nest after it has commenced to lay. We have on two occasions known birds to lay again in nests from which the eggs had been removed. In one case the clutch which was taken was in an advanced state of incubation.

The Little Grebe is by no means so expert a diver as its larger congener, and it never remains so long under the water. Coward once watched one at Great Budworth which several times emerged from its dive tail first.

ORDER TUBINARES.

FAMILY PROCELLARIIDÆ.

STORM PETREL.

PROCELLARIA PELAGICA, Linnæus.

Heavy weather occasionally drives the Storm Petrel upon our coasts, and exhausted birds have been picked up in inland localities. Brockholes, who had one that was found dead near Puddington, stated that he had several times seen Storm Petrels on the Mersey near Birkenhead.¹ The bird has been observed at Ince, and in the winter of 1880-81 several were shot at New Brighton.² On November 10th, 1885, a Storm Petrel struck the lantern of the Dee Lightship.³ There is an example from Walton in the Warrington Museum. In the winter of 1856 an exhausted bird was picked up near Stockport;⁴ and two are said to have been captured in the east of the county in March 1894.⁵ Mr. R. Nunnerley of Congleton has a Storm Petrel which he shot at Macclesfield some years ago.

¹ Brockholes, *op. cit.* p. 16.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 349.

³ *Report on the Migration of Birds in the Spring and Autumn of 1885*, p. 116.

⁴ L. Grindon, *Country Rambles*, 2nd edition, p. 289. 1882.

⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, March 20, 1894.

FORK-TAILED PETREL.

OCEANODROMA LEUCORRHOA (Vieillot).

The Fork-tailed Petrel has occurred several times in Cheshire after heavy weather in winter. One was found dead in a ploughed field near Wilmslow about the year 1824.¹ In the stormy winter of 1886-87, when Fork-tailed Petrels were recorded from inland localities in different parts of England, one was picked up near the Northgate Station, Chester, on December 8th, and another was shot at Queensferry on January 10th.² An exhausted bird was picked up in Eccleston Meadows, near Chester, on October 10th, 1892;³ and a few days later a dead bird was found near Macclesfield.³ There is an example in the Warrington Museum, obtained at Latchford in 1897. During the third week in September 1899, a number of storm-driven Fork-tailed Petrels were obtained in West Cheshire. Mr. R. Newstead saw three and heard of two others in the neighbourhood of Chester, whilst a sixth was shot on Frodsham Marsh. This last bird was erroneously reported as a Storm Petrel in the *Manchester Guardian* of September 25th, 1899.

¹ J. Blackwall, *Loudon's Magazine of Natural History*, vol. ii. p. 275. 1829.

² Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 349.

³ N. Neave, *Natural History Journal*, vol. xvii. No. 145, p. 16. 1893.

FAMILY PUFFINIDÆ.

MANX SHEARWATER.

PUFFINUS ANGLORUM (Temminck).

Storm-driven and exhausted Manx Shearwaters have been picked up on several occasions in Cheshire, as a rule early in September. Two birds in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, were obtained near that city—one picked up dead at Upton on September 1st, 1892, the other found three days later in an exhausted condition in the London and North-Western Railway goods-shed at Chester Station. In 1887 one was shot at Saltney on September 1st.¹ On the 1st or 2nd of September 1897, a Manx Shearwater was captured at Northwich and was sent to Manchester for preservation; another was taken alive on a pit at Sale about the year 1889.

FULMAR.

FULMAREUS GLACIALIS (Linnæus).

The Fulmar is not likely to occur frequently in the sheltered estuaries of the Cheshire coast, and, so far as we know, the bird has only been observed twice. Byerley records one from Wallasey, during stormy weather, in the spring of 1854;² and there is one in the Grosvenor Museum which was picked up dead on the river-bank at Chester on October 4th, 1894.

¹ Dobie, *op. cit.* p. 349.

² Byerley, *op. cit.* p. 23.

ADDENDA.

GOLDFINCH (page 76). In the course of conversation with Arthur Jenkinson, an Altrincham bird-catcher, we obtained some additional evidence of the breeding of the Goldfinch at Mobberley (*ante*, p. 77). Jenkinson said that the last 'Red Linnet's' nest that he had seen was in a pear-tree at Mobberley 'some years ago.' He could not remember the exact date, but could recall where two of the three young birds taken were sent to. He said that 'Red Linnets' had bred for several years in the same orchard, and that, when the fields were 'rougher' than they are now, the bird was not uncommon at Mobberley. He still occasionally captures Goldfinches in winter in the neighbourhood of Hale Moss.

HOBBY (page 138). In June 1894, Mr. Percy Shaw of Whitehall, Buxton, found the Hobby breeding near Goyts Bridge. The eggs were laid on an old nest, probably that of a Magpie or Carrion Crow, in a tree overhanging a small ravine on the Derbyshire side of the Goyt, about three hundred yards from the county border. Mr. A. H. Evans of Cambridge has one of the eggs in his collection. Although the nest was in Derbyshire, the record is of value, proving as it does that the Hobby has bred on the Cheshire border.

WHOOPEE (page 158). Mr. L. Jones informs us that he has often seen Whoopers passing Hilbre Island; and on one occasion a herd of sixteen frequented the neighbourhood for some time. He examined one of these birds in the Liverpool Market, which had, with others of the same herd, been shot on Burton Marsh.

BEWICK'S SWAN (page 159). Mr. L. Jones writes us that on October 27th, 1897, during very cold weather, he shot a Bewick's Swan which was passing in a southerly direction.

POCHARD (page 167). On January 28th, 1900, Oldham saw eleven Pochards at Redes Mere. They were diving for food in shallow water near the bank. On March 11th, 1900, Mr. F. S. Graves saw a flock of twenty of these birds on the same water.

GREY PHALAROPE (page 207). In November 1898, Mr. L. Jones shot a Grey Phalarope near Hilbre Island, the only example he has ever met with in that locality.

FORK-TAILED PETREL (page 253). A Fork-tailed Petrel was picked up beneath the telegraph wires on the railway at Adswold, near Stockport, on the 13th or 14th of November 1899. It is now in the collection of Mr. J. Hamilton Leigh.

MANX SHEARWATER (page 254). Mr. J. H. Leigh has a Manx Shearwater which was found alive, but disabled by a gunshot wound, on the Stockport sewage-farm, in September 1899.

BLUE-HEADED WAGTAIL.

MOTACILLA FLAVA, Linnæus.

Mr. R. Newstead, writing to us under date March 29th, 1900, states that he has just examined a male Blue-headed Wagtail, in the collection of Mr. J. H. Stock, which was shot on the lawn at White Hall, Tarporley, in 1898. This species, rarely observed in the West of England, has not been previously recorded for Cheshire.

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